



The Hub

Boston Past and Present



Thomas H. O'Connor

New foreword by Robert J. Allison

The HUB

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BOSTON PAST AND PRESENT



Thomas H. O'Connor

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY PRESS

Boston

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*To my students, who have always given
back much more than they received*

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FOREWORD TO THE HUMANITIES OPEN BOOK EDITION

Tom O'Connor was a teacher who wrote, not a writer who taught. His teaching and his writing, though, were of a piece. From a depth of research and analysis he would offer a clear and comprehensive history. Every student and every reader came away knowing and understanding more. In print and in person, Tom O'Connor was a masterful storyteller: a seminar of graduate students, who already knew how the story ended, still gasped in astonishment when he concluded, "...and then, only a month after his inauguration, William Henry Harrison died."

A master at delivering anecdotes and stories, he was never satisfied with the simple or the obvious. He always looked behind the façade. "But why?" he would ask a student volunteering a glib and ready answer. "Why did this happen?" He always knew there was something more. As he explored twentieth-century Boston, he found it frustrating that so much was simply related in anecdotes. He wanted to know how James Michael Curley had held the city in thrall for half a century, but his sources kept repeating, as he said, "the story of Curley and the banker." He always knew there was something more, and one reason his books remain indispensable is that the pat answer never satisfied him.

Tom O'Connor and his wife Mary both worked at the Boston Public Library during their high school days; to support their growing family, he continued working there in graduate school. But he quit the Library when Boston College called him to teach, even though B.C. paid \$350 a year less. O'Connor remained at his alma mater for more than sixty years, as a teacher, department chair, assistant to the President, and University Historian. Yet *The Hub* grows from his long connection with the Boston Public Library. In conjunction with the American

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bicentennial in 1976, the Library invited its former employee to deliver a series of lectures on Boston's history. He complied, and the Library published his lectures as *Bibles, Brahmins, and Bosses* (1976), an indispensable introduction to the city's major historical themes that set O'Connor on a new path of inquiry.

He had followed his first book, *Lords of the Loom: The Cotton Whigs and the Coming of the Civil War* (1968), with textbooks on American history, a volume on religion in American society, and a study of the Civil War and Reconstruction. But after his 1976 foray into Boston history, O'Connor applied his deep understanding of religion, economics, and political change to a lifetime study of his native city. His *Fitzpatrick's Boston, 1846-1866* (1984) examined an overlooked Catholic prelate in a changing city, after his research into the Cotton Whigs—the Boston elite who created textile mills—revealed a surprising correspondence between members of the Brahmin establishment and Bishop John Fitzpatrick, and he asked, *why?* His next book, *Building a New Boston, Politics and Urban Renewal* (1993), looked at the city's post-World War II transformation. He approached the fraught subject not with nostalgia for what had been, nor enthusiasm for what might be, but instead a judicious appraisal of motivations and outcomes, intentional and unexpected.

Retired from teaching at Boston College, O'Connor wrote a new book almost annually. Books on his hometown of South Boston, on Civil War Boston, on the Boston Irish, on the Catholic Church in Boston, on Boston as the Athens of America, and essays on a myriad of Boston subjects engaged and enlightened his readers. All his books have the same graceful prose, clarity, depth, with choice compelling quotes and anecdotes, engaging and inspiring new inquiries into a past that had grown too familiar.

This deep immersion in Boston history led him to rethink the history of Boston he had presented in *Bibles, Brahmins, and Bosses*. The questions and answers offered during his lecture series in the old McKim Building of the Boston Public Library in 1976, when Kevin White was Mayor and Louise Day Hicks presided over the City Council, seemed no longer as relevant to the twenty-first-century city. *The Hub* is thus a new history for a new city and its new citizens, a rethinking of Boston's story by one of its best storytellers and one of its most profound students and scholars. It is wonderful to have the *The Hub* issued once again, sadly without O'Connor's revising hand and eye. He, and the city he chronicled, still have much to teach us.

Robert J. Allison
Suffolk University

PREFACE

There must be thousands of books about Boston.

Boston is a city with such a long, fascinating, and often controversial history that it could not help spawning innumerable histories and biographies, novels and essays, monographs and journals, usually concentrating on some particular time period, some unusual personality, or some special event. A great many writers have focused their attention on Boston's unique colonial heritage as well as its celebrated role in the struggle for American independence, as evidenced by the throngs of visitors and tourists who travel the city's Freedom Trail. Other scholars have immersed themselves in the celebrated works of Boston's distinguished list of literary figures, often pointing out their important contribution to the cultural renaissance called the "Flowering of New England." Still others have chronicled the heroic efforts of those men and women who worked tirelessly to achieve the social demands of liberated women, or who committed themselves to the moral imperatives of the movement to free the slaves.

The changing character of Boston's economic fortunes is a phenomenon that has intrigued a number of writers who have watched the city constantly reinvent itself in the face of changing times and revolutionary technologies. Boston's experience as a city of immigrants has also been a subject of studies by authors who have analyzed the efforts of an old city to retain its original character and its cherished traditions in the face of overwhelming social, cultural, and ethnic change. And in more recent years, the increasing and pervasive impact of racial diversity and multicultural differences on Boston's traditional networks of ethnic communities has occupied the time and attention of historians and social scientists.

Despite the number and variety of these specialized studies, however, there is really no single, one-volume history that provides either the general reader or the specialist with an overall survey of the three-hundred-year history of Boston—something that is essential in order to appreciate Boston's distinctive

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qualities as a truly special place. In the course of its history, Boston has undergone extensive topographical transformations, survived serious economic revolutions, experienced major social upheavals, and absorbed massive population changes—all without losing its essential character and personality. For more than three hundred years, Boston has demonstrated an unusual ability not only to survive, but to assimilate the old with the new, the traditional with the progressive, blending the past with the present in a style all its own. I become particularly aware of this juxtaposition of historical images whenever I stop along Tremont Street in downtown Boston, just beyond the cemetery at King's Chapel, and look eastward. I can actually see three centuries of Boston architecture at a single glance: in the center background is the eighteenth-century Faneuil Hall; to the right in the foreground is the nineteenth-century redbrick Sears Crescent; and to the left is the twentieth-century City Hall. And on a clear day, perhaps you can catch a glimpse of Boston Harbor, where John Winthrop's small fleet arrived in the early seventeenth century. It's all there, and it's all uniquely Boston.

It is this long view, this broad view, that makes it possible to better appreciate the many different and significant changes that have taken place during the city's long history. These transformations didn't just happen by accident, nor did they take place in a historical vacuum. To fully appreciate the many ways Boston has changed over the course of three hundred years, grasp the full meaning of each critical turning point, understand the forces driving the responses, and evaluate the conditions shaping the consequences, a larger historical perspective is absolutely essential. The story of Boston is not merely a classic example of immediate challenge and response; it is a unique example of long-range and remarkably effective adaptation to the kinds of cosmic changes that have reduced some communities to ghost towns and caused others to seek survival by transforming themselves into historical theme parks.

One of the oldest cities in North America, Boston has demonstrated a remarkable degree of toughness, resiliency, and ingenuity in not only adjusting to each crisis, but in most cases coming out stronger than before. It continually adapted to new political ideas, adjusted to new cultural forms, reorganized its economic structure, rebuilt its streets, filled in new lands, expanded its limits, absorbed new people, and experimented with new social patterns without losing that indefinable but recognizable quality that makes it so distinctive. Not that change comes easily to Boston—it never did. Indeed, it was when confronted with change that Boston all too often displayed a mean and selfish

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spirit that belied its reputation as the Cradle of Liberty and the Athens of America. Proud of its intellectual accomplishments and conscious of its cultural preeminence, Boston seldom welcomed any sort of change that would threaten what it had so carefully built. Whether it was political intolerance against those who protested the Puritan establishment in the eighteenth century, religious bigotry against Roman Catholics in the nineteenth century, or displays of racial hatred against African Americans in the twentieth century, Boston was capable of frequently disillusioning even those friends who most admired it.

By eventually adapting to change and accommodating itself to modern ways—although at times grudgingly, often angrily, and almost always slowly—Boston has continued to be a live, functioning urban community that has not given into the nostalgic impulses that can so often turn a once-famous city into a lifeless historical shrine. It is certainly true that Boston is one of the great historical attractions in the United States, and the famous colonial monuments are there to prove it—the Old North Church, Faneuil Hall, the Old South Meeting House, and the Old Granary Burying Ground, plus many others. But the city did not become frozen in time; it continued to be a place where people live and work and study and play. Having survived generations of political struggle, industrial change, and social turmoil, Boston recovered from a period of debt and deterioration to become a prosperous commercial metropolis, a capital of banking, a leading city of computer technology, a major center of medical research and higher education, and a vital urban community that is in the process of even further expansion and development.

The most serious challenge Boston faces in the future, however, is no longer confined to the construction of high-rise buildings, multilane highways, or extravagant commercial developments. The current challenge is the extent to which Boston will be able to retain its own distinctive identity as a city whose moral standards, civic virtues, and intellectual accomplishments once inspired a nation. The degree to which it will be able to restore and reinvigorate these special qualities and effectively transmit them to new generations of immigrants, as it did to past generations of those who came to share in the blessings of John Winthrop's "City upon a Hill," will largely determine whether or not, at the end of the next millennium, Boston will again deserve to be hailed as the "Hub of the Universe."

THOMAS H. O'CONNOR
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BOOK ONE
Cradle of Liberty



Chapter

1

A Wilderness Zion

IN EARLY April 1630, a line of vessels cleared the Isle of Wight in the English Channel, caught the prevailing winds, and set sail across the stormy waters of the Atlantic Ocean. In the lead was the flagship *Arbella*, a sturdily built ship of 350 tons, followed by three more vessels—the *Talbot*, the *Ambrose*, and the *Jewel*—with seven other emigrant ships departing in their wake to America. Crowded below deck, where the overhead was so low that a man could not stand erect, passengers were often sick from eating tainted beef, cheese, or butter, and terrified by the rolling and pitching of the vessel. “The winds blew mightily, the sea roared,” wrote Francis Higginson, “and the waves tossed us horribly.”

The men and women aboard the small flotilla headed for the New World were members of an English Protestant group called Puritans. They were leaving behind them a country where they felt they could no longer enjoy religious freedom, social harmony, or financial prosperity. Following the break with the Roman Catholic Church during the early part of the sixteenth century because the pope refused to annul Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine of Aragón, Lutherans, Calvinists, Baptists, and other members of different Protestant sects appeared in various parts of the kingdom, vying for power and appealing for

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followers. Frustrated by the turmoil created by so many conflicting religious factions, Henry's daughter, Queen Elizabeth I, set out to rid England of what she described as "foolish theological quibbling." With the support of Parliament, Elizabeth established a single national church, the Church of England (the Anglican Church); provided the Thirty-Nine Articles as its official creed; and instituted the Penal Laws to enforce conformity and compliance. This powerful combination of religious faith and national loyalty proved an effective establishment that satisfied most English citizens.

There were some, however, for whom the Elizabethan Settlement was by no means a satisfactory resolution of the religious conflicts. This was especially true of English Protestants who wished to carry the Reformation to its logical conclusion, and who refused to accept the vestiges of Catholic rituals and ceremonies they still found in the Anglican Church. A large number of these nonconformists held views very similar to those of the European theologian John Calvin, who preached a wrathful God of terrible judgment, a humankind born into sin and corruption, and a doctrine of predestination wherein God alone had already determined who would be saved (the "elect," the "saints") and who would be sent to eternal damnation. Convinced that outstanding moral virtue and exemplary personal behavior were outward signs of salvation, those who considered themselves members of the elect self-imposed the strictest standards of personal conduct, with an emphasis on the serious, sober, and frugal aspects of life. Denouncing all ornamentation as sinful frivolity, they refused to support the Church of England until it was purified of distasteful papist rituals and practices. Some moderate dissenters, professing themselves to be loyal and law-abiding citizens, agreed to obey the letter of the law. They officially became members of the Anglican Church but made no secret of the fact that they intended to work from within to purify that church. As a result, they became known as Puritans. Other, more radical members of the Puritans refused to join the Anglican Church at all and separated themselves from the new state religion completely. These dissenters became known as "Separatists."

With the death of Queen Elizabeth I in 1603, the position of religious dissenters in general—and Puritans in particular—became increasingly precarious. Leaving behind neither husband nor children, the Virgin Queen was succeeded by King James VI of Scotland, son of the late Mary Stuart—Mary, Queen of Scots. Taking up residence in London as James I, the penniless young Scotsman proved as politically tactless as he was personally arrogant. As a staunch advocate of the philosophy of the divine right of kings—which held

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that the monarch was absolute, answerable only to the laws of God and not the laws of men—King James demanded the unquestioning obedience of his subjects. In the process, he also insisted that every English subject subscribe to the doctrines and practices of the Church of England. He made it clear that as head of both state and church, he would brook neither political disloyalty nor religious dissent.

Many Protestant dissenters found this kind of royal absolutism totally unacceptable. They reacted strongly against the idea of the king forcing them to acknowledge the Church of England, which they refused to recognize as a truly Protestant religion. King James was adamant, however, and insisted that either the dissenters conform to the regulations of the Anglican Church or he would “harry them out of the land.” Indeed, the king and his agents made life so miserable for the Separatists that in 1608 one congregation in Nottinghamshire fled England to seek asylum in Holland. Some twelve years later, in 1620, a group of these Separatists sailed across the Atlantic Ocean as Pilgrims and created an independent settlement of their own at Plymouth Plantation on the shores of Cape Cod.

In 1625, King James I was succeeded by his son, Charles I, who was equally committed to the divine-right-of-kings philosophy and just as strongly opposed to religious dissenters in any form. In his determination to enforce strict political and religious conformity, Charles I was supported actively by the archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud. Working together, they renewed the punitive measures and harassing tactics against various Puritan groups whose insistence upon substantial reforms in the Anglican Church were regarded by the king as both dangerous and treasonous.

The mounting pressures of royal persecution were made even worse by the discouraging economic conditions in sections of England where many Puritans were located. East Anglia, for example, was in the midst of a serious depression after the importation of silk from France and other European countries caused a decline in the local cloth trade. This affected the farmers who raised sheep, the spinners, weavers, and dyers who worked the cloth, and the clothiers who were forced to discharge their workers when they could not sell their goods. Faced with the failure of a land that “grows weary of its inhabitants,” as John Winthrop wrote in his “General Observations,” and the official disapproval of a government that subjected them to constant humiliations, a number of middle-class Puritan dissenters began to chafe under the pressure. Persuaded that “evil times were coming upon us,” they were convinced that there was little or no

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John Winthrop was a prosperous country squire whose dissenting Puritan views caused him to despair of a future in England. On March 22, 1630, he led a small fleet across the Atlantic to eventually establish a settlement on the Shawmut peninsula. Winthrop was regularly elected governor of the Puritan colony until 1634, when he was turned out of office in favor of Thomas Dudley. Winthrop was returned to office in 1638, and after 1645 was elected governor annually until his death in 1649. *Courtesy of the Bostonian Society/Old State House.*

future in England for themselves or for their children. It had become painfully obvious that they would have to find some other place where they could earn a living, organize their own kind of society, and worship God in the ways they thought appropriate.

Late in the summer of 1629, a gentleman by the name of John Winthrop, lord of the manor of Groton, in East Anglia, and a justice of the peace, met at Cambridge, England, with John Humphrey, Isaac Johnson, Thomas Dudley, and several other well-to-do Puritan colleagues from Lincolnshire to discuss plans for leaving England. Realizing that the hostile authorities in London

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would never give Puritans a piece of land for themselves, they investigated a grant of land in America that King Charles had given the previous year to a merchant named Matthew Craddock. The grant was a substantial strip of territory extending from the Merrimack River south to the Charles River, and extending (as most colonial charters did at that time) “from sea to sea.” Craddock represented a group of merchant-adventurers who were looking forward to making their fortunes by establishing a string of mines and trading posts along the Atlantic seacoast. The members had elected Craddock head, or “governor,” of what was called the New England Company, whose corporate rights were spelled out in a document known as the “Charter of the Colony of the Massachusetts Bay in New England.” Before Craddock and his associates could launch their commercial enterprise, however, the company’s powers were taken over by Winthrop and his Puritan supporters who had bought up the controlling shares of the corporation, and who prepared to use it as a ready-made means of creating their own kind of social experiment in the New World.

Appreciating the necessity of establishing some kind of barrier between themselves and the hostile English authorities, Winthrop and the other Puritan leaders insisted that the company transfer its government from London to America and to those “that shall inhabite there.” Having observed the way in which English-based stockholders had manipulated the operations of other enterprises, the Puritans did not want their Massachusetts company to become one of those colonies where the settlers made the difficult crossing and then endured all the hardships of frontier living, while others stayed home in England, made all the important decisions, and then enjoyed the lion’s share of the profits.

As part of their “Cambridge Agreement,” Winthrop and the other Puritan leaders decided that only those people who were willing to leave England and actually make the journey to America would be allowed to become stockholders. Persons who did not want to emigrate would be required to sell their stock in the company to those who were prepared to become part of the overseas settlement. On the basis of this agreement, John Winthrop was elected governor of the association now known as the Massachusetts Bay Company. To further ensure that the company would be free of English interference, and that all future meetings of the stockholders would take place in Massachusetts, not in London, the Puritan leaders took the original copy of the company charter with them. This was quite unusual, and exactly how it was accomplished even the eminent historian Samuel Eliot Morison admits was a mystery, but the Puritans insisted

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that it had been done legally before a court in England. Under the leadership of John Winthrop in East Anglia, Sir Richard Saltonstall in the London area, and John White in the West Country, small groups of Puritans moved ahead with their plans with remarkable speed during February and March of 1630. Winthrop's people from the Midlands and London embarked from the port of Southampton; those from the West Country sailed out of Bristol and Plymouth. Setting out in relays, by early April the first eleven vessels, with Winthrop and the *Arbella* in the lead, were on their way across the Atlantic Ocean.

In the course of the voyage, Governor Winthrop delivered to his fellow Puritans on board the *Arbella* an eloquent address called "A Modell of Christian Charity," in which he outlined the spirit of the enterprise and the importance of its mission. The immediate objective, he said, was to seek out a new home "under a due forme of Government, both civill and ecclesiasticall," a community in which concern for "the publique" must outweigh all private interests. To accomplish this, a spirit of brotherly love was absolutely essential, he emphasized, one in which "we must bear one another's burdens. . . . We must be willing to abridge ourselves of our superfluities, for the supply of other's necessities. We must uphold a familiar commerce together in all meekness, gentleness, patience, and liberality." If the members of the Puritan community acted in such a manner, Winthrop assured them, then they would have God on their side, and He would bless them and protect them in their undertaking. And then people everywhere would compare the Puritan community with their own settlement and say: "The Lord make it like that of New England." Winthrop concluded, "For we must consider that we shall be as a City upon a Hill. The eyes of all people are upon us. So that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and a byword throughout the world."

After making landfall near Cape Ann, Winthrop's small fleet moved down along the coastline of Maine until on June 12, 1630, the first ships finally anchored in the North River near Salem. This was not the first time that Englishmen had set foot on the coast of the "Northern Parte of Virginia," as they originally called New England. But the earlier landings had all been small, temporary, and commercial. Bartholomew Gosnold's voyage in 1602 to the northern fishing banks was financed by English entrepreneurs, as was Captain Martin Pringle's search for sassafras and furs the following year. In 1604, George Weymouth visited the shores of New England near the mouth of the

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Kennebec River and returned to England with glowing reports of the region's commercial possibilities. Most leaders in such overseas expeditions were sea captains and merchant-adventurers who were out to establish the kinds of trading posts and fisheries that would turn up sizable profits for their English backers. The leaders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, however, were set on a different mission, with an entirely different objective. Once John Winthrop had taken the company away from Matthew Craddock, observes historian Bernard Bailyn, "the leadership of the company was securely in the hands of men whose main occupation was not trade." One by one, the rest of the Puritan fleet put in either at Salem or farther south at Charlestown, until by the end of the summer nearly a thousand settlers had arrived. Although at first Winthrop and most of the other Puritan leaders decided to settle on the Charlestown peninsula, the lack of fresh drinking water and the outbreak of various illnesses such as scurvy and "hectic fever" caused them to reconsider their location.

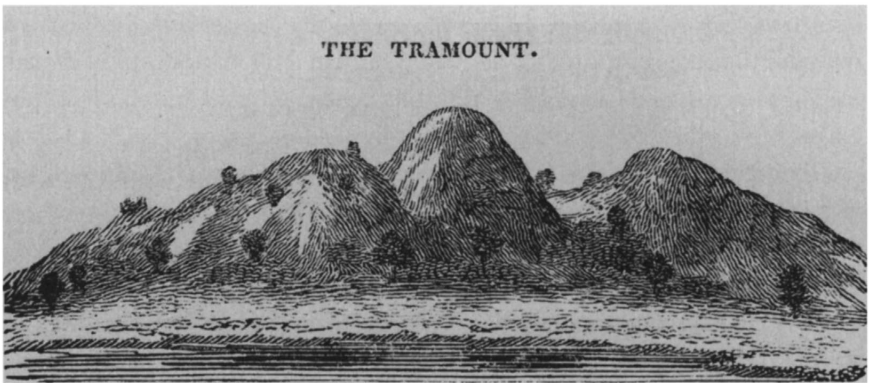
It was this point that Winthrop was approached by a rather reclusive Anglican clergyman, the Reverend William Blackstone (Blaxton), who had built a home for himself on the Shawmut peninsula on the opposite side of the Charles River.* Blackstone told the governor about an excellent spring that would furnish plenty of fresh drinking water, and urged him to leave Charlestown and bring his settlers across the river to the new location. Winthrop accepted the friendly invitation, others followed, and by the middle of October of 1630 the new settlement had a population of some 150 persons. By the end of the year, the congregation that originally gathered in Charlestown had made the move across the Charles River and became the First Church of Boston. "Boston" was the name chosen, after the town in Lincolnshire, England, from which many of the Puritans had come. Originally known as St. Botolph's Town, its minister, John Cotton, delivered a farewell sermon to the first group of settlers as they left; later he also moved to America to become a teacher in the First Church of Boston.

The Puritans who had moved across to the Shawmut peninsula found their home to be very small, roughly two miles long and only a mile wide at its most extreme points. It was, in fact, almost an island, joined to the mainland by a narrow strip of land ("Boston Neck") so low-lying that the waters of the harbor swept over it completely during stormy weather. The settlers would

* Today there is a plaque at 50 Beacon Street, on the corner of Spruce Street, indicating the approximate location of the Reverend Blackstone's original house.

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have appreciated the description set down in 1634 by a visiting Englishman named William Wood as he stood in the prow of a ship in Boston Harbor and surveyed the town's shoreline in a broad sweep, from the 80-foot Fort Hill on the south side looking out on Roxbury Bay, across to the windmill that stood atop the 50-foot rise known as Windmill Hill overlooking the Charles River. "This necke of land is not above four miles in compasse, in form almost a square, having on the south in one corner a great broad hill whereon is planted a fort," he wrote. "On the north side is another hill equal in bigness whereon stands a windmill." Between these two landmarks, forming the backbone of the small peninsula, he called attention to perhaps one of the peninsula's most prominent features—"a high mountain with three little rising hills on the top of it, whereof it is called 'Tramount.'" These were the three peaks that crowned the central ridge—the 80-foot Cotton Hill on the eastern side; the West Hill, which balanced it off on the Charles River side to the west; and in the middle Beacon Hill, or Sentry Hill, which rose to a height of some 150 feet. This central hill served as a strategic point from which lookouts could survey the ocean and set fire to a beacon light (originally a barrel of pitch atop a large pole) to alert the citizens of the town in the event of an attack by some French man-of-war.



Certainly the most prominent topographical feature of early Boston was the high elevation of land in the center of the Shawmut peninsula, with three distinctive hills or peaks referred to as Trimountain—eventually Tremont. The easternmost peak was Pemberton Hill, called Cotton Hill; the westernmost peak was known as Mount Vernon Hill. The central hill, rising some 138 feet above sea level, was originally called Sentry Hill, and later named Beacon Hill. *Courtesy of the Bostonian Society/Old State House.*

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This was colonial Boston, an isolated, independent, jagged fragment of land, whose irregular coastline was broken up by numerous coves, inlets, creeks, and marshes. It was around one of these coastal landing places on the south side, known as the Town Dock, where most of the early settlers congregated, close to sources of fresh water and not far from Cotton Hill. It was in this part of the peninsula that the early town slowly began to take shape, growing from about two hundred people in 1631, to nearly three hundred the following year, to over four hundred in 1633. At first the town was little more than a motley collection of branch huts and turf cottages, arranged in two rough semicircles around the Town Dock. In 1641, the Boston settlers purchased from the Reverend Blackstone a parcel of forty-five acres of land that they set aside for what they called the “Common use.” This phrase was clarified in 1649 by a law of the General Court stating: “There shall be no land granted either for house plott or garden out of ye open ground or Common field.” On this common land, against the backdrop of the town’s three towering hills, the townspeople pastured and exercised their horses, grazed their cattle, and drilled their militia. Despite the legend that wandering cows were responsible for the town’s notoriously crooked maze of streets, the urban historian Lawrence Kennedy points out in *Planning the City upon a Hill* that Boston was actually laid out on the pattern of a medieval English village, with the focus on the market area off the Town Dock. The question now was whether this small settlement would be able to survive in a new land and a strange environment, so far away from all that was safe and familiar.

In at least one respect, the first settlers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony were fortunate in their initial permanent outpost. They were able to begin their American enterprise in a section of the North American continent that was surprisingly devoid of native inhabitants. The size of the original Indian population of the New England area before the Puritans arrived in 1630 is estimated to have been about twenty-five thousand, most of them branches of the Algonquin family. During 1616–1617, however, some strange and still-undiagnosed epidemic decimated the local Indian tribes, wiping out at least two-thirds of their people and reducing their total population to somewhere between fifteen thousand to eighteen thousand in all New England. As a result of this plague, as well as previous losses suffered in wars with the Abenaki Indians to the north, the number of Indians located along the Massachusetts seacoast dropped from about three thousand to a mere five hundred, mostly scattered along the seacoast and the river valleys. The Wampanoag Indians, too,

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located farther south in the general vicinity of the Plymouth Colony, suffered heavy losses from the epidemic of 1616–1617 and were forced to abandon large portions of their lands. To make matters worse, in 1633, only three years after the establishment of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, a smallpox epidemic broke out among the local Indians, who had no immunity to most European diseases, and reduced their numbers even further.

Although the first years of settlement in Boston took place without serious conflict, the movement of white settlers into the Connecticut River valley resulted in clashes with the native Pequots in the region. In 1636, after the Pequots killed two Massachusetts merchants, the General Court sent John Endecott and nine men to burn several Indian villages. The following year, a combined force of ninety colonists from Massachusetts and Connecticut, supported by several hundred Indian allies, surprised the main Pequot stronghold and ruthlessly massacred four hundred men, women, and children.*

Without having to face the immediate prospect of conflict with native peoples, therefore, early settlers had the relative leisure of examining the advantages and disadvantages of their location on the Shawmut peninsula. Availability of fresh drinking water was perhaps their greatest asset, along with the possibility of grazing their cattle safely and securely within the narrow confines of the peninsula. This was an important consideration since the absence of trees on the small neck of land made it extremely difficult to obtain lumber not only for buildings and fences, but also for fuel to take the settlers through the cold winter months. During most of the colonial period, wood would have to be lugged in from the mainland, or brought in from one of the numerous islands that dotted Boston Harbor.

The economic future of Boston, however, did not lie in fresh water, trees, or rocky soil; it lay in the salt waters of the harbor. Boston was situated in a location ideal for it to become a major shipping center, very similar to the role the old town of Boston in Lincolnshire, England, had played in medieval times.

* The English continued to push south and west until in 1675, under the leadership of a Wampanoag chief called King Philip, Indians began attacking English settlements. The New England Confederation—combined colonial militia forces organized out of Boston—found the mobile Indian warriors difficult to pin down. By the late summer of 1676, however, the militia had subdued most of the warriors and on August 12 it was reported that King Philip had been killed. The cost of King Philip's War for white settlers was enormous, but for the Indians the cost was much greater. In addition to the destruction of their villages and the deaths of thousands of their people, the Indians suffered the loss of their lands and the erosion of their native culture.

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The Shawmut peninsula was central to the whole Boston Harbor, the center for all traffic that went on between the towns to the north and those to the south. The port itself, safely sheltered behind the harbor islands, was deep enough to accommodate the largest ocean-going vessels from across the sea, yet shallow enough to allow effective construction of wharves and piers. Almost as soon as they had settled in their new homes, merchants of Boston and nearby Salem were busy building ships and beginning a maritime trade that would radiate outward like spokes of a wheel. They supplied manufactured goods to the inland towns; they sent their vessels out to the fishing banks and brought back fish for their own consumption; they exported their products to the Jamestown Colony and to the West Indies. Before long, they were exporting fish to England as well as to such Catholic countries as Spain and Portugal, whose religious days of fast and abstinence made them profitable customers. Within a year of his arrival in Boston, Governor John Winthrop had ordered the construction of the thirty-ton bark *The Blessing of the Bay*, which he used to carry valuable furs he acquired from the Indians to be sold in England. Even at this early stage, the small Puritan colony was showing signs of unusual enterprise and prosperity.

Once securely settled, the first serious concern of Governor John Winthrop was to establish a suitable “civill and ecclesiasticall” government for the new Puritan community. With the original copy of the Charter securely in hand, and with company headquarters located in Boston, the Massachusetts Bay Company was practically independent of England, and proceeded to regulate its own affairs through a relatively simple form of government. Stockholders in the company were called “freemen” and were required to meet together four times a year as “one, great, generall, and solemn Assemblie.” It was up to them to admit additional freemen, and to “make, ordeine, and establishe all manner of wholesome and reasonable orders, laws, statutes, and ordinances, directions, and instructions” for the colony—with the proviso that such laws could not be “contrarie to the lawes of this our realme of England.” Once a year, at the spring session of this general assembly, the freemen were responsible for electing from among their own numbers a governor, a deputy governor, and a court of fifteen assistants. The original idea of an overseas company was that the president and directors would remain in England and deal with the settlers in America through an agent who would reside in the colony. In the case of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the president and directors became the on-site executives of the company located in America, as well as members of the upper branch of a legislative assembly and the judicial officers of a Puritan

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commonwealth. Since it soon became inconvenient for many of the freemen to attend all the meetings of the assembly, or the "General Court," as it came to be known, a representative system was devised to lessen the burden of attendance.

While the General Court was content to legislate for the Bay Colony as a whole, it delegated powers over such local matters as mending fences, establishing weights and measures, maintaining militia watches, and appointing town constables to the residents of Boston and to the other communities that gradually came into being. According to historian G. B. Warden, the first settlers had "no single precedent in mind" when they first organized town meetings to settle such matters. In all probability, the Puritan concept of the "godly community" helped promote the idea of a general body in which most adult males could elect their own town officials and settle their own local problems. And, indeed, this seemed to be the case. At first, all free male residents took part in the town meetings, and although most were members of the church, the town had not yet made a clear distinction between freemen and general inhabitants. It was not until March 1636 that the General Court formally defined the parameters of town government, giving the "freemen of every towne" the power to carry out most of the local responsibilities. Women and servants, even though they may have been church members, according to historian Darret Rutman, were excluded from town affairs.

Upon the initiative of the General Court, or upon popular petition, the town constables would notify the inhabitants when a town meeting was scheduled to convene and what the general agenda would be. At the appointed time, the voters and other residents would assemble at the Town House in Boston at the head of King Street (later State Street). After a moderator was chosen to see that the bylaws and orders of the town were followed correctly, a prayer was delivered by a local minister, after which the gathering would turn to the business at hand. At the March and May meetings, the duly qualified freemen would cast secret ballots for their own town officers as well as for the town representatives who would serve in the General Court. Other town meetings were held throughout the year to deal with ongoing concerns or special issues, with decisions made by a voice vote in which many inhabitants in attendance usually joined their voices with those of the official voters, regardless of the rules. All town officials, with the exception of schoolteachers and watchmen, were part-time amateurs without any fixed salary or any organized bureaucracy. After an examination of contemporary letters and documents, G. B. Warden has concluded that there is little record of what actually went on behind the

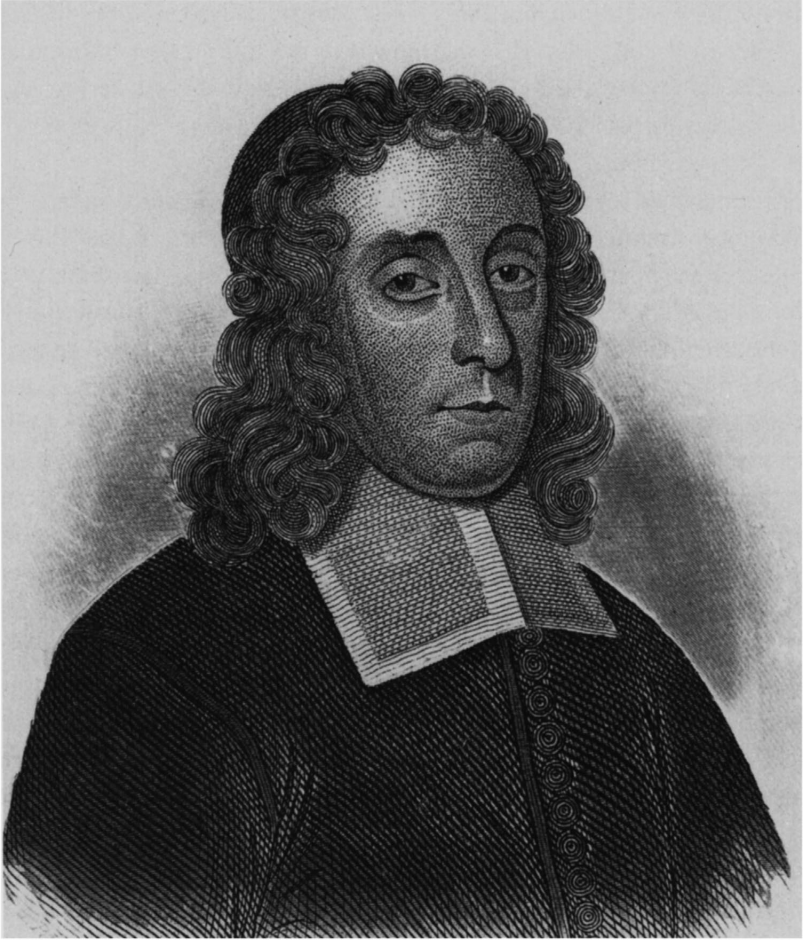
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scenes at these early town meetings. Those people involved in public life rarely put down in writing what they did, how they did it, how they politicked, or what techniques they used in deciding the fate of the town—an early example of the secrecy for which the conduct of local political affairs in Boston would later become famous.

Through this somewhat informal and often spontaneous system of participatory government, Governor John Winthrop was determined not only to preserve the liberties of “free born Englishmen” in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, but also to foster the kind of education and learning that would ensure that the religious and moral principles of the Puritan colony would be carried well into the future. As early as 1642, every town was instructed by the General Court to see that parents were training their children in “learning & labor & other employments.” Five years later, in 1647, the General Court ordered every town in the colony with fifty householders to pay someone to teach children to “write & reade.” If a town had grown so large that it had “one hundred Families or Housholders [*sic*],” then it was required to set up a “grammer schoole” supported by public funds. It was hardly a coincidence that having created the Boston Latin School in 1635, the Puritans established Harvard College the following year, only six years after they had landed on the desolate shores of Massachusetts Bay. One of the primary considerations in establishing this college was, to be sure, to guarantee an adequate supply of wise and learned ministers when the present ones—as the anonymous pamphlet of 1643 entitled *New England’s First Fruits* put it—“shall lie in the dust.” But the founders of Boston also wanted to “advance learning and perpetuate it to posterity,” not only through the ministers themselves, but also through those future political and financial leaders of the colony who would have available to them the classical education of an English university like Cambridge, where John Winthrop and so many of his Puritan colleagues had studied.

The establishment of civil government and the promotion of higher learning were very important to the future of the new Puritan commonwealth, but these two goals were essentially subordinate to an even higher objective—the establishment of a true religion. As governor and leader of the enterprise, John Winthrop had a responsibility to establish the truly “godly city” that he and his colleagues envisioned as a proper place for the communion of the elect. This would include not only the formulation of a distinctly Puritan form of Protestant worship, the kind that had been denied them in England, but also a markedly recognizable way of life that personified their spiritual values.

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Increase Mather was born in Dorchester, Massachusetts, in 1639, graduated from Harvard College in 1656, and received his M.A. degree from Trinity College, Dublin, in 1658. In 1664 he became teacher of Boston's Second Church and later refused to leave to become president of Harvard. Although he protested the withdrawal of the Massachusetts Charter in 1683, he accepted a new charter framed by William and Mary, and became politically influential. *Courtesy of the Bostonian Society/Old State House.*

An insistence on sobriety of manners, purity of morals, and a form of social community that would neither “exalt the rich nor degrade the poor” were characteristics designed to make Boston the “City upon a Hill” for all to see and admire. Strictly speaking, the Puritans who had followed Winthrop from

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England to the shores of Massachusetts Bay were members of the Anglican Church. Indeed, they insisted upon their devotion to England and their loyalty to the Church of England even as they waved goodbye to their families and their friends at the dock. "Forget not Old England!" cried the Reverend John Cotton, vicar of St. Botolph's Church, as he preached a farewell sermon to the voyagers at Southampton. "Forget not the wombe that bore you and the breasts that gave you sucke." And the Reverend Francis Higginson brought his children to the stern of the ship to take a last look at their native land and bid a fond farewell to "Dear England! . . . We do not go to New England as Separatists from the Church of England," he reminded them, in obvious contrast to the Pilgrims who had sailed to Plymouth ten years earlier, "but we go to practice the positive part of church reformation, and propagate the gospel in America."

By the time they arrived on this side of the Atlantic, however, the differences between the Puritans and their Separatist brethren seem to have narrowed considerably. Almost as soon as they landed, they began to establish the type of religious worship the authorities had prevented them from having back in England. They organized their churches on the basis of the Congregational model, with each church virtually an independent unit. Each congregation, once it was approved, managed its own affairs and elected its own pastor, who derived his power from the consent of the congregation. There were no bishops and no hierarchical structure of any kind, except for periodic meetings of ministers sitting in synods. Stripped of every outward sign or symbol reminiscent of Catholicism or Anglicanism—stained-glass windows, holy water, incense, statues, candles, crucifixes, vestments, robes, and surplices—their places of worship were stark and simple meetinghouses where the congregations gathered to conduct religious services on the Sabbath, or to transact matters of civic and political importance during the remainder of the week.

A Puritan congregation usually came together three times a week to worship, in the morning and afternoon on Sunday, and again for a midweek lecture. These gatherings normally included the entire community, although only the so-called "visible saints" were considered full members and participated in the Lord's Supper. A church member, at that time, did not mean a mere believer, a churchgoer, or a member of a parish, as it might mean today. Membership was not conferred automatically by birth, or sacramentally by baptism or confirmation later in life, as in most other Christian denominations. Membership was a trial, a personal ordeal, the successful passage of which involved new obligations of "mutual watchfulness, helpfulness, and rigorous conduct,"

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according to historian Samuel Eliot Morison. A Visible Saint, therefore, was someone who was admitted to the body of communicants only after rigorous examination by himself and by the elders concerning his conversion to the faith and his ability to walk with God.

Once gathered, the congregation sat in rigidly defined ranks, according to their places in the spiritual and social hierarchy. For hours they would listen to a sermon, a highly logical and intellectual unfolding of the meaning and application of a particular scriptural passage. Although women were formally admitted to church membership—where they were, for the most part, what historian Darret Rutman called “mute observers”—they were denied all political rights, as were many men who either were not church members or did not own any property. Leaders of the Bay Colony made it clear that they did not really welcome those who did not accept Puritan religious views. As the Reverend John Cotton later observed: “The design of our first planters was not toleration, but [they] were professed enemies of it. . . . Their business was to settle . . . and secure Religion to Posterity according to the way which they believed was of God.” Those who did not subscribe to Congregationalism, therefore, were permitted to reside in the Bay Colony as long as they did not cause any disturbances, but they were not allowed to take an active role in the governance of the colony. Furthermore, although such persons were not members of the established church, they were obliged to have it oversee their public and private lives. This was to be a colony based on Puritan ideals and governed according to strict Puritan principles. The community would be controlled by Puritan leaders who were conscious of having created what John Winthrop called a “City upon a Hill,” a shining beacon that would attract “the eyes of all people” upon it.

With the laws of the Bible, especially the Old Testament, providing the overall source of faith and the rule of life, the Puritan clergy, headed by the Reverend John Cotton, worked in close cooperation with the political leadership, headed by Governor John Winthrop. Together they developed a Bible commonwealth that they were certain would become a model for the ages. In the early stages of Boston’s history, however, it was always the rule of the Bible that came first. As chief political magistrate Winthrop might govern and Winthrop might execute the laws, but always Winthrop and the laws had to be in accordance with a higher law, the law of Divine Authority, that encompassed all things. Precisely what that authority was would be explained by the priestly teacher, the Reverend John Cotton. According to his Calvinistic views, the

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elders of the community were responsible to God for the spiritual welfare of the people entrusted to their care. The state, therefore, must always aid, and never hinder, the church leaders in the exercise of their spiritual leadership. Under this arrangement, Winthrop was the divine student exercising what appeared to be absolute legislative and judicial power. It was his duty to determine; it was the duty of the people to obey. But Winthrop's almost divinely inspired authority was always understood to be a sacred stewardship subordinate to the precepts of the Bible as interpreted by the Reverend Cotton. Puritanism was a powerful influence, writes historian Edmund Morgan, that created a tension "at best painful and at worst unbearable." It required that a person rest his whole hope in Christ, but at the same time taught that Christ would utterly reject him unless, before he was born, God had foreordained his salvation. As a result, many persons lived in "an agony of uncertainty," wondering whether God had singled them out "for eternal glory or eternal torment."

Despite what seemed to be an ideal interrelationship between church and state in the Bay Colony—a model of what an ideal Christian community would look like under God's revealed law as interpreted by his leadership of Saints—it was not long before this ideal structure began to show signs of breaking down. In a dramatic example of what historian Edmund Morgan has called the "Puritan Dilemma," the conflict between Rule and Reason soon became apparent. While Puritan leaders assumed that there would be a natural political and religious conformity in the community, the Puritan (and Protestant) ideal of individual interpretation led to a growing multiplicity of beliefs and convictions that often conflicted with the official teachings of the established Puritan leadership. Although the resulting theological disputes usually led to swift and decisive action on the part of the authorities, the conflicts continued.

There was the case, for example, of a young minister in Salem named Roger Williams, who believed that the Church of England was beyond redemption and who felt that reforms from within were totally ineffective. In conflict with Puritan policy, he argued that the law requiring everyone to attend church services was wrong, if only because it brought unregenerate sinners into the house of worship. As far as he was concerned, only those who had been "born again" into God's love should be allowed to attend services. The young minister's political ideas caused even greater consternation among the members of the Puritan establishment in Boston. He felt that the claims of the king of England to the continent of America were completely unsound, since the English neither owned the land nor had discovered it. Properly speaking, he

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said, the land belonged to the Indians, from whom the English should have purchased it. Williams also questioned whether people should have to pay taxes to support ministers, indicating that he could find nothing in the Bible to justify such procedures. Williams's outspoken criticism of the Puritan commonwealth threatened to disrupt the colony and weaken the control of the Puritan leaders. The magistrates, therefore, ordered Williams banished from the Bay Colony in 1635, causing him to flee south into the wilderness until he finally reached safety on the shores of Narragansett Bay. There he purchased some land from the local Indians and established a settlement he called Providence Plantation.

At just about the same time, another dissenter from Puritan thinking was also banished from Boston. Anne Hutchinson and her family had settled in Boston in 1634, and before long she began holding weekly prayer meetings in her home, where she discussed matters of religious doctrine. Her meetings became so popular that she soon attracted a large following. Contrary to the prevailing views of the Puritan leadership, Hutchinson taught that divine revelation was a continuing process and that truths gained through revelation should supplant biblical authority. To the Puritans, this was nothing short of heresy, and they grew more disturbed when they learned that she was denying that good conduct could be taken as a sign of salvation (as the Puritans taught), while insisting that the Holy Spirit in the hearts of true believers relieved them of the responsibility of obeying the laws of God (which the Puritans denied). This was too much! Such teachings, along with the fact that as a woman she should not be speaking out in public on religious matters, caused the male-dominated leadership to move against her. In November 1636, the woman whom Governor Winthrop described as being of "haughty and fierce carriage" was brought before the magistrates and charged with the civil offense of acting in disruptive ways inappropriate for a woman. After a spirited trial in which Hutchinson defended herself with embarrassing effectiveness, the magistrates ordered her banished from the Bay Colony. A few months later, this civil punishment was followed by formal excommunication from the church. Anne Hutchinson fled with her family to found Portsmouth, Rhode Island, and became a member of a small but growing number of religious dissenters from Massachusetts who sought refuge in what would later become the colony of Rhode Island. After her husband died, Hutchinson and her fourteen children moved to Long Island, where they were killed in 1643 by Indians who were quarreling with the region's Dutch settlers.

Only a few years later, in 1649, another woman suffered the consequences of public disapproval for similar inappropriate behavior. Anne Hibbens was

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Anne Hutchinson arrived in Boston with her husband and children in 1634. She became well known for the weekly meetings she held at her home to discuss religious topics. She so vigorously expounded her ideas of a "covenant of grace" that within three years she was put on trial by the Puritan magistrates for "traducing the ministers and their ministry." Banished from the church and the colony, in 1638 she emigrated to Rhode Island, and in 1642 moved to Pelham Bay in the Bronx where she was killed by Indians. *Courtesy of the Boston Public Library, Print Department.*

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a housewife who was taken to court by a carpenter who complained that she had publicly accused him of doing shoddy work. In the course of the trial, the magistrates reprimanded the woman for not being submissive enough, and for speaking out publicly against a man instead of having her husband do it. Hibbens was excommunicated from the church for breaking God's law calling for wives to be "subject to your husbands in all things."

The incidents involving Anne Hutchinson and Anne Hibbens dramatically portray the position of woman in colonial Boston. Boston men were continually on the defense, warning women of the dire consequences of failing to fulfill the properly submissive and basically nonintellectual role of the female they believed to be prescribed by God. Women were to keep house, raise the children, fear God, and serve the needs of their husbands. Women were considered spinsters if they had not married by their mid-twenties or early thirties and viewed as outcasts for not fulfilling the proper womanly duty of marriage. In sermons and speeches, the male authorities continued to emphasize that, as the weaker sex, women should be submissive to men, who were stronger and considered to be the closest to God in the chain of superiority.

A married woman was not allowed to hold property or to maintain an income of her own. All she possessed on entering marriage was turned over to her husband, who became, in effect, her overseer. If she became a widow, a wife was entitled to one-third of her late husband's estate (enough to subsist on), but the remainder was either disposed of according to her husband's wishes or given to sons, who then became responsible for the care of their mother. Women were not allowed to share pews with men in the church and usually had to enter the meetinghouse through separate doors. In addition, women were not allowed to speak in church or to ask questions; in keeping with the admonitions of St. Paul, they were instructed to "ask their husbands at home, for it is a shame for women to speake in the church."

Although Boston prided itself on the education it provided for its male members, only the most basic education was available to females. Little girls were allowed to join little boys at "dame schools" at a penny a week, where they were trained in good manners, the alphabet, penmanship, and a bit of reading. Beyond that, girls were excluded from book learning and thoroughly grounded in whatever arts they would need to become housewives. Often young girls were sent out as apprentices to other people's homes to learn the household tasks of domesticity. Mothers were not trusted with this task because it was believed that they would not be strict enough with their own daughters. Anything like higher

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education was not considered suitable for women, in the belief that women were not strong enough mentally to endure the difficult educational process.

In addition to unsettling religious controversies, there were other internal difficulties that added to the changing character of the original Bay Colony. At first, the ruling authority of the General Court consisted only of the governor, his assistants, and the dozen or so original stockholders of the company—the “freemen.” This ensured a tightly controlled political system, and for the first few years, while the number of settlers in the Shawmut peninsula was still small, this was an acceptable arrangement. Within a short space of time, however, the population of the Massachusetts Bay Colony began to grow rapidly. King Charles I persisted in his persecution of the Puritans, with the result that thousands of dissenters continued to flee England in search of peace and security. The decade from 1630 to 1640 saw some seventy-five thousand people leave England because of religious persecution and economic hardship. One of the largest waves of this “Great Migration” swelled the population of Massachusetts to over fifteen thousand by the year 1643. As the colony grew increasingly larger, the inhabitants began to resent the idea that a mere handful of men should be governing a settlement that was already approaching twenty thousand people. They organized their protests and put pressure on the General Court to expand its very limited membership.

Puritan leaders grudgingly agreed to admit over a hundred new “freemen” to the General Court, but in order to ensure future political control they stipulated that only members of the Congregational Church would be allowed to hold the title of freemen. “No man shall be admitted to the freedom of this body politic,” ruled the General Court, “but such as are members of the church.” The freemen, it was agreed, would elect the assistants; the assistants, in turn, would elect one of their number as governor. Under this arrangement, only the governor and the assistants were empowered to make the laws of the commonwealth. Here was a political structure in which membership in the General Court was restricted on the basis of religious affiliation, and the powers of the legislative body further restricted to the governor and his assistants.

Several towns quickly expressed dissatisfaction with such a close-knit system of legislative power, and when the assistants began levying taxes without consulting with local town meetings, the towns began agitating for further changes in the political structure. In April 1634, representatives from several towns forced Governor Winthrop to show them an actual copy of the well-guarded corporate Charter they had brought with them from England. It was

then discovered that not only were the governor and the officers of the company supposed to present themselves for general elections once a year, but also that the laws of the colony were to be made by all freemen—not just by the governor and his assistants. Accordingly, when the General Court met the following month, representatives from the various localities expanded the size of the legislative body to include deputies from every town, and after that proceeded to participate in the legislative process. They also established the rule that elections in which all freemen would take part would be held every year—and then promptly showed their displeasure with what they felt were Winthrop's questionable tactics by voting him out of office and electing Thomas Dudley as their new governor.

The idea of an annual election, an election held on a specific date, of all officers—governors and members of the upper branch as well as deputies from the towns—became so popular in the American colonies that it was imitated wherever the king could be persuaded to give his royal consent. The process became an integral feature of the various state constitutions that were drawn up during the later Revolutionary years and appeared even later in the Federal Constitution, which called for the election of the president, senators, and representatives on the same day. This was a very early indication of the ways in which the American approach to representative government would differ from the traditional English parliamentary model.

For the next ten years, the General Court of Massachusetts contained a troublesome mixture of argumentative factions. The assistants were loyal to the governor and generally sympathetic to the Puritan leadership in Boston. The growing number of deputies, on the other hand, were generally responsive to the lower classes who lived in the surrounding towns. Finally, in 1644, a two-house legislature was established, permitting each group to form its own separate chamber, organize its own rules, and conduct its own affairs. This development marked the complete transition of the Massachusetts Bay Colony from a mere overseas trading company to a bona fide commonwealth in its own right.

The basic tenets of Puritanism may have been confined to a relatively tiny segment of the New England seacoast during the first half of the seventeenth century, but they were to have an impact on American society and culture that would extend far beyond their immediate geographical surroundings. Although still a small, isolated, seafaring community with less than twenty-five years of history behind it, the town of Boston had already developed certain

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basic themes that not only were characteristic of its colonial origins, but also may be considered an essential part of its present-day distinctiveness.

In spite of a close association between church and state that drove some dissenters such as Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson into exile and others into prison, the conservative Congregational establishment contained within itself the seeds of revolutionary democratic forms that would have surprised even its Puritan originators. By cultivating a system of separate churches and independent congregations, the leaders of the Puritan community conditioned their colonists in their town meetings to think in terms of limited government, individual interpretation, civil liberties, and the power of the people. And by emphasizing the existence of divine law and a supreme authority to which all man-made laws must conform—"the bounds which the Lord hath set," as John Cotton expressed it—they impressed upon the public conscience its right, and even its obligation, to question the precepts of human rulers whenever they conflicted with the eternal morality of the "higher law." The element of reformism, too, was an integral part of Puritanism from the very beginning; after all, the movement was started to reform and purify the Anglican Church. That commitment to critical analysis and constructive change would continue as an essential ingredient of the Boston mentality well into the future.

Above all, from the very beginning of their enterprise, Bostonians were firmly convinced that the community they had established was truly something unique, something really special. Puritan leaders such as John Winthrop considered themselves more than simply political refugees, homeless emigrants, or religious exiles seeking temporary relief from royal persecution or economic depression. Instead, they saw themselves engaged in a permanent and long-range mission of cosmic proportions, offering to lead the whole world to the new freedom and fulfillment of the Reformation. Every moment of their lives, they were conscious of building their tiny outpost on the Shawmut peninsula into the "City upon a Hill" that would become the veritable hub of the universe and the inspiration for all mankind. Times would change and circumstances would differ tremendously, but future generations of Bostonians would continue to view Boston not just as "another" city, but as a city set apart by its origins, its history, and its dedication to excellence, destined to accomplish great and unusual things for the glory of God and the benefit of the community.

2

Loyalty Versus Liberty

THE European colonial process in the Americas during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, whether conducted by the Spanish, the French, or the English, was based on certain common assumptions. The most basic of these was that a colony existed primarily for the political prestige and financial prosperity of the mother country—not the other way around. Colonies were expected to pay taxes, furnish manpower for the imperial armies, and produce valuable natural resources: gold and silver, hides and furs, lumber and tobacco. These products would not only enrich the royal coffers of the colonizing power, but also make the colony itself a more valuable part of the colonial network. Commercial nations like England would have their trading companies carry many of these products throughout the world for sale, while the colonies that had produced the raw materials in the first place would buy them back as finished goods at much higher prices. The colonial relationship was essentially a complementary one, with colonies in undeveloped areas occupying a subordinate political and economic position in relation to the imperial authority across the ocean.

By the middle of the seventeenth century, it had become all too clear to many persons in the English government that the Massachusetts Bay Colony was

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not conducting itself in accordance with the basic assumptions of the English colonial system. For a period of some thirty years, from 1630 to 1660, the Bay Colony ran its own affairs and pretty much “did its own thing.” It operated its own government, conducted its own religious establishment (from which even members of the Church of England were excluded), created its own educational system, built its own ships, conducted its own trade, evaded the payment of taxes, and generally behaved in a manner that was remarkably independent of the supervision and regulation of the authorities in England.

For the most part, England had virtually ignored the imperial shortcomings of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. This was certainly not because it approved of what was happening, but because conditions at home were in such turmoil that the government was in no position to do anything about the colony. A long train of bitterness and conflict between King Charles I and the Puritan leaders of Parliament had finally led to an outbreak of bloody civil war that lasted from 1642 to 1646 and ended with the trial and execution of King Charles I in 1649. For the next decade, political power was assumed by Oliver Cromwell, leader of the Puritan forces, who abolished the monarchy entirely, dismissed Parliament, and ruled the nation as a virtual military dictator under a commonwealth form of government until his death in 1658. These were years of constant change and upheaval, when Englishmen had little or no inclination to concern themselves with colonial problems far across the Atlantic Ocean. In the face of political anarchy following Cromwell’s death, English military leaders finally invited the eldest son of the late king to return from exile in France and assume the throne of England as Charles II.

Although he was in power only a short time after his restoration to the throne in 1660, King Charles II undertook an aggressive colonial policy in North America. In 1663, he rewarded a group of eight friends and cavaliers with a huge grant of land for the “Carolina” region, and the following year he authorized his brother, James, Duke of York, to take away from the Dutch the lands between the Connecticut and Delaware Rivers, which subsequently became the English colonies of New York and New Jersey. In the space of only a few years, the new monarch had extended the boundaries of the English colonies in North America in one unbroken line along the Atlantic coast, from the southern borders of French Canada in the north to the northern borders of Spanish Florida in the south.

Charles also moved vigorously against the New England colonies with the intention of making them a much more loyal, productive, and cooperative part

of the empire. First, he struck out sharply at the practice in the Massachusetts Bay Colony of restricting voting powers to members of the Congregational Church and denying the right to vote to all others—especially members of the Church of England. He ordered the Bay Colony to extend the suffrage to all persons of “good estate,” regardless of church membership—except Catholics, Jews, and infidels.

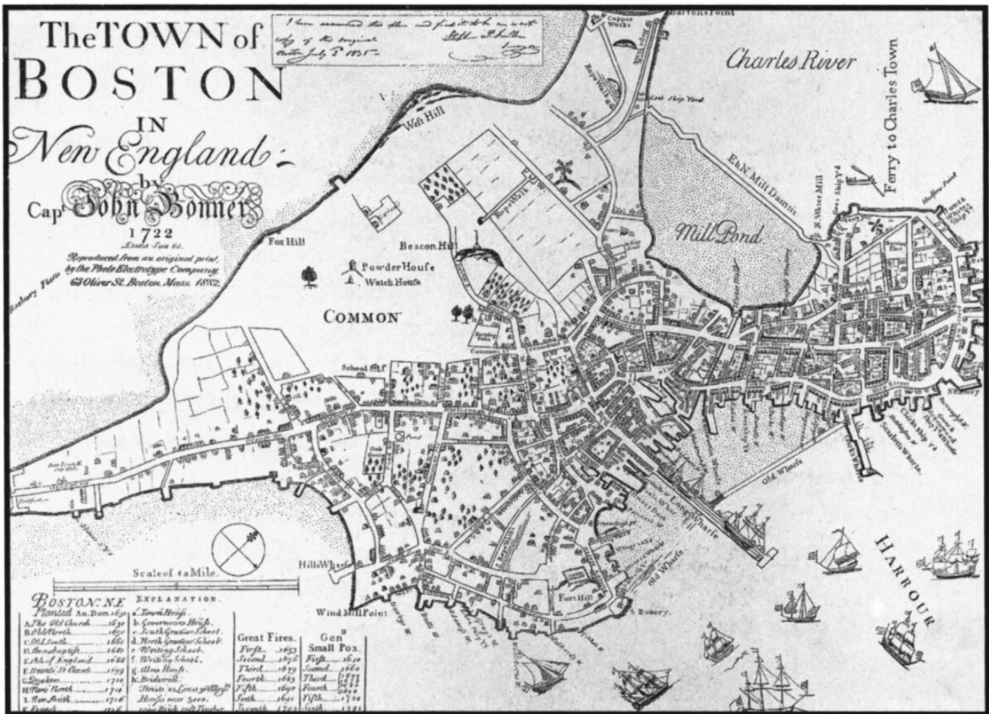
Perhaps a more serious issue concerned the question of foreign markets and overseas trade. King Charles II and his administrators were well aware that many of the American colonies were developing their own trade routes with nations outside the empire. Much of the tobacco produced in colonies such as Virginia and Maryland, for example, was reported to be going to foreign markets, while numerous New England merchants were apparently seeking out their own customers all over the world. Of all the regions in colonial North America, New England was perhaps the least suited to the mercantilist concept that the major function of a colony was to supply raw materials to the mother country. Most of New England, with its rocky soil and small farms, produced very few raw materials or staple products that England wanted—with the notable exception of lumber and such lumber products as pitch, tar, resin, and turpentine, which were in great demand by the shipyards of the royal navy. In order to supplement their meager farm incomes, New Englanders had turned to the sea. They built and manned their own ships and developed an extensive transatlantic network that was referred to as the “triangular trade” because of the configuration of its lanes. Perhaps the best known of these overseas routes was that by which Boston merchants exported fish, livestock, hay, flour, and lumber to various parts of the West Indies; in return their ships would bring back cargoes of sugar, coffee, cocoa, and molasses. Converting much of the molasses into rum in local distilleries, these same Boston merchants would carry their cargoes across the Atlantic on the second leg of the journey, which brought them to the west coast of Africa. There the rum would be exchanged for Africans, who were then transported across the ocean to be sold into slavery in the West Indies.

But there were many other routes that also fit into the informal triangular pattern. Some ships sailed from New England to the West Indies carrying food, horses, lumber, and fish, which were exchanged for great amounts of sugar. The sugar was then shipped to England, where it was traded for manufactured goods that were then brought back across the Atlantic to markets in North America. Still other ships from New England carried fish, food, furs, and timber to

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various countries in southern Europe, where the raw materials were exchanged for such commodities as wine, silk, spices, and tropical fruit. These products were then transported to England, where they were traded for manufactured goods that were shipped back to America for sale. In this way, Yankee ships sailed back and forth from one continent to another, doing an active business and making many Boston merchants incredibly wealthy, while contributing substantial amounts to the English economy.

Once King Charles II had been restored to the throne and the government stabilized, English authorities became determined to exercise more control over the colonial trade and make sure that more of the profits from that trade went directly into the royal coffers. With this idea in mind, Parliament



The first printed plan of Boston, titled *The Town of Boston in New England*, was done in 1722 by Captain John Bonner, a navigator and shipwright. It points out the location of the Boston Common, and demonstrates that well into the eighteenth century most of Boston's population still congregated along the docks and wharves at the south side of the peninsula. *Courtesy of the Boston Public Library, Print Department.*

passed a series of Navigation Acts in 1660 and expanded them in 1663. Among other things, these laws insisted that colonials use only English-built ships and man them with predominantly English crews, in order to maintain a high level of employment among English sailors and shipbuilders at home. They also forbade colonial merchants to sell their raw materials to other nations, especially such “enumerated” commodities as tobacco, sugar, indigo (a blue vegetable dye), and cotton, which were to be channeled exclusively to English markets. By means of such regulations, the English clearly set out to reestablish the supremacy of the home government over all economic activities within the empire, and to subordinate private profits to imperial prosperity. It was obvious to King Charles II and his ministers that in order to make the mercantilist system work properly, it was necessary for the authorities to maintain continuous and effective supervision of colonial activities.

For the next ten years or so, however, the new Navigation Acts were honored much more in breach than in observance. England was still far away across the Atlantic Ocean, and Puritan leaders in the Massachusetts Bay Colony were able to circumvent the new regulations fairly easily, to a great extent because the English government had become so deeply involved with complex foreign problems involving France and Holland that it had little opportunity to exercise the kind of supervision and control necessary to ensure compliance. Things began to change in 1674, however, after an imperial customs officer named Edward Randolph (a mean-spirited spy and revenue collector, according to Thomas Boylston Adams) visited America and conducted an on-site inspection of the Bay Colony. Randolph returned to England with a blistering indictment of conditions in Massachusetts. He accused the colonials of continuing to defy the authority of the king, of violating the trade and navigation laws, of coining their own money, and of using religion to enforce a restricted suffrage in direct defiance of the king’s specific orders to the contrary. He urged King Charles II to bring Massachusetts directly under royal control, even if it was necessary to use English troops to “reduce Massachusetts to obedience.”

After a period of prolonged and fruitless negotiations, in October 1684 England finally decided to annul the old Massachusetts Charter. Not only was the Bay Colony transformed into a royal colony, under the direct supervision of the Crown, but King Charles II also set in motion a plan to consolidate Massachusetts with all the other New England colonies into a single major colony to be known as the Dominion of New England. This plan was designed to accomplish two objectives: First, it would establish a much more unified

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and effective military defense zone in the northeast in the event of a war with the French in Canada; second, it would provide a better opportunity for English authorities to enforce the rules and regulations concerning foreign trade. Although King Charles II died in 1685 before his plan could be put into effect, his brother, King James II, formerly Duke of York, quickly followed through with the design for this new political-military province. A year after succeeding to the throne, James II sent a boyhood friend, Sir Edmund Andros, to Boston to assume his new position as governor general of the Dominion of New England. Known as “Tyrant Andros” because of the unpopular reputation he acquired while serving as governor in New York and New Jersey, Andros arrived in Boston with great pomp and ceremony, escorted by a company of sixty red-coated guardsmen, in a display designed to intimidate the local inhabitants. This group of Englishmen sparked considerable animosity among the local citizenry and was described by some of the local clergy as “a crew that began to teach New England to drab [use prostitutes], drink, blaspheme, curse, and damn, committing insufferable riots amongst a quiet and peaceable people.”

Governor Andros almost immediately made himself completely obnoxious with a series of tactless and provocative measures that were totally at odds with the traditions of the Puritan commonwealth. He placed the militia under his direct control and issued a declaration that town meetings would be limited to one a year. He further announced that taxes would be set and levied by executive fiat, not voted on annually by elected representatives as had been the custom. Money for the support of schools was cut off. The oil from stranded whales was declared the king’s property as a gift from God and confiscated for the welfare of the Crown. Old land titles were declared to be “of no more worth than the scratch of a bear’s paw,” with the result that all persons holding title to land and property of any sort were required to come to offices in Boston and there revalidate their deeds and titles—for a price, of course. On March 25, 1687, Andros flew in the face of the town’s Congregational establishment when he ordered that the Old South Meeting House be converted into an Anglican Church. Edmund Andros had made himself the most hated man in Boston.

Fortunately for the inhabitants of Boston, the detested rule of Governor Andros proved to be short-lived as a result of events across the ocean. In England, the high-handed tactics of King James II led his political opponents to drive him off the throne and out of the country in 1688; he was replaced

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with his daughter, Mary, and her Dutch husband, William of Orange.* Once the Puritans in Boston heard the news about this “Glorious Revolution,” they conducted their own insurrection. The people of Boston rose up in revolt, seized and imprisoned Governor Andros and the members of his council, restored the old government, and then waited to see what would happen when William and Mary finally took over the reins of government in England. Indeed, the Bay Colony’s most eminent minister, the Reverend Increase Mather, had sailed to London the previous year to plead the colony’s case against Governor Andros. Now that King James II had been ousted, Mather was hard at work trying to persuade the new monarchs to forget about the plan to create a Dominion of New England, and to let Massachusetts go back to its former political life under its original charter.

William and Mary had serious objections about allowing the Bay Colony to resume its former semi-independent status; at the same time, however, the new sovereigns were hesitant about alienating an important segment of their North American colonies. In 1691, therefore, they agreed to a new compromise charter for Massachusetts. On the one hand, they insisted that the governor of the colony would henceforth be appointed by the Crown; on the other hand, they agreed to allow the members of the governor’s council to be chosen by the members of the elected lower house. On one point, however, William and Mary were particularly insistent: representatives of the General Court were to be elected by voters of the colony on the basis of *property*—not on the basis of their religious affiliation. Members of the Massachusetts government would no longer be required to be members of the established Congregational Church. Although King Charles II had tried unsuccessfully to accomplish this some thirty years earlier, this time the provision proved effective and would have significant long-range results on the town’s future. For the time being, of course, most of the old clerical leaders continued to exercise considerable power and influence in the colony, and for many years they would be regularly consulted about things like the appointment of the governor and the election of his councilors. But the abolition of the religious requirement for holding office and participating actively in the affairs of the Bay Colony clearly set the stage for the gradual decline of Boston’s “Aristocracy of Saints.”

* In 1707, England and Scotland were united as Great Britain (or the United Kingdom) by the Act of Union. From here on in the text, reference will be made to Great Britain instead of England.

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Even without this constitutional change, however, it seems highly unlikely that the old church oligarchy would have been able to sustain itself as the central focus of power in the face of the religious and social changes that were taking place in the Massachusetts Bay Colony toward the end of the seventeenth century. For one thing, the very nature of Congregationalism contained a natural self-destruct mechanism. Its strongly independent nature and essentially separatist character worked against any kind of permanent authoritarian hierarchy—another instance of such Protestant concepts as self-reliance and individual interpretation proving to have subtle but significant political ramifications. Then, too, the system of landholding prevalent in the New England region had a definite influence on the forms of political representation that developed in the area. In other parts of colonial North America, large patroonships or sprawling plantations often made it possible for a handful of landholders to emerge as the self-appointed spokesmen for the laboring classes. Because the freeholds in the Boston area were usually small and highly independent family units, there emerged a grass-roots yeomanry that was almost impossible to control, and that demanded individual representation in the political process. But it was the new charter's substitution of property qualifications for religious qualifications that struck the final blow to clerical supremacy in the Bay Colony. The new charter supplied the impetus for the gradual emergence of a new kind of oligarchy whose power would be based not so much upon religious orthodoxy as upon material prosperity and financial success.

Many orthodox Puritans were painfully aware of the changing religious and cultural patterns in their colony, and were fearful of the movement away from what they regarded as the divine protection of the Almighty. It may well be that the atmosphere of fear and tension that prevailed in Massachusetts during the early 1690s contributed in no small way to the brief but frightening outburst of hysteria in 1692 over the presence of witches and witchcraft in the colony. The decade from 1690 to 1700, especially with the new century approaching—an event that many feared might be the Apocalypse, the end of the world—proved to be a period of great change and considerable instability for the Bay Colony. After all, in only a short time the citizens of Massachusetts had seen the revocation of their revered old charter and the loss of their political autonomy. They had suffered through the creation of the Dominion of New England, the revolution against the king of England, and their own revolution against Governor Andros and his administration. Now, they were being forced

by the new charter to allow all kinds of religious sects to worship as they pleased in what they had once assumed was the exclusive domain of the Puritan faith. In 1709, even the Quakers were given permission to construct a meetinghouse in Boston. Everything the Puritans had always believed in was changing before their very eyes.

To make matters worse, there were terrifying rumors at this particular time that the dreaded Roman Catholics were plotting to return to power and overthrow the Protestant religion. Puritan Boston might have to extend a certain degree of tolerance to other Protestant denominations, but it had made no change in its hostile attitude toward Roman Catholics. Hatred of Catholicism was something the Puritans brought with them from England, where Catholics, commonly referred to as Papists, were regarded not only as members of a blasphemous religion, but also as subversive enemies committed to the overthrow of the government. "Rome was Babylon," writes historian James Hennesey, "the pope the anti-Christ of the Apocalypse." Puritans took every precaution to prevent Catholics from coming into the Bay Colony, and in 1700 the General Court passed a law forbidding any Catholic priest to reside in Massachusetts, under penalty of death. Indeed, in 1688, in the midst of a Catholic "scare," an elderly woman named Ann Glover was accused of being a secret Catholic and hanged as a witch on Boston Common.

Puritans looked upon Quakers—members of the Society of Friends who followed the teachings of George Fox in seventeenth-century England—with similar fear and loathing. The religious views of these "Children of the Light," who rejected established creeds and formalized doctrines, and refused to accept the intermediary of anything like an organized church in their private and highly personal relationship with the Almighty, made them immediately suspect as a Christian sect. The fact that they also refused to pay tithes to the established church and repudiated the leadership of those they called a "hireling ministry" made them also appear a clear and present danger to the Puritan establishment. Considered to be evil influences on the young, Quakers were usually whipped out of town at the end of a wagon, and were put to death if they returned. In 1659, two members of the sect were hanged on Boston Common, and on June 1, 1660, a woman named Mary Dyer went to the gallows for coming to Boston and spreading the doctrines of Quakerism.

With rumors of Catholic uprisings in the air, and with Puritan ministers such as Increase Mather and his son, Cotton Mather, warning the members of their congregations that "Satan was walking the streets," one of the most

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extreme forms of emotional hysteria broke out in the nearby town of Salem Village (now Danvers). The strange and unusual behavior of a group of young girls in that town raised charges of witchcraft that quickly whipped people into a frenzy of fear and recrimination. Hundreds of people were accused of being witches, many of them were sentenced to death, and nineteen were executed before the witchcraft trials ran their course. Instead of reinforcing the old religious standards, however, the overall effect of the witchcraft hysteria appears to have further diminished the prestige of the established church and weakened the political authority of the old Puritan leaders in the Bay Colony.

After 1700, there emerged a group of men of wealth and property who began replacing the men of religion as the determining force in the life of Boston. Not that Bostonians rejected their religious heritage, forgot about their idealistic mission, or discarded their traditional moral principles. The tendency in Boston, even in colonial times, is never to destroy old things, but to build new things over old things. This new emphasis on wealth, property, and material success in old Boston did not, however, develop at the expense of morality. It was constructed on the solid foundation of the traditional Puritan ethic. In his perceptive biography of Thomas Hutchinson, Bernard Bailyn described the life of the future governor's father, Colonel Thomas Hutchinson, who became rich from trading and shipping investments. "He was industrious, . . . charitable, unaffected, unworldly, and clannish," writes Bailyn. "A strait-laced, pious provincial, he read the scriptures to his family mornings and evenings, and devoted himself to trade and to the welfare of his kin and community." In Boston, at least, it was clear that money and morality would have no difficulty walking hand in hand for many generations.

During the first ten years of the small colony's existence, Bostonians had been able to make a fairly comfortable living providing foodstuffs, meat, fish, dairy products, and personal services for the large number of immigrant Puritans escaping the rigors of English persecution during the reign of the Stuart kings. The first generation of Puritans generally continued to follow the types of occupations they had worked at back in England, serving as cobblers, carpenters, blacksmiths, masons, shopkeepers, tradesmen, and craftsmen. When the heavy migration from England dropped off sharply during the late 1640s, however, a serious economic crisis took place in the town, and new sources of income had to be found. Some colonists sought out new and more fertile lands for more extensive agricultural production; others embarked on a wide variety of diversified economic enterprises, setting up ironworks and leather tanneries;

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in the late 1660s, they expanded the manufacture of rum and the smuggling of slaves; by the early 1700s, they were busily engaged in importing from Holland. The colonists learned quickly, and by the first half of the eighteenth century, Boston was leading all other towns in shipbuilding, the leather trades, meat-packing, hat-making, the manufacture of axes and hardware of all kinds, cheap export furniture, the distilling of rum, and the construction of such vehicles as chaises, sedans, and coaches.

With their various triangular networks well established, Boston merchants continued to use their own ships and their own seamen, ignored the Navigation Acts, kept their own profits, and participated in ventures that brought them wealth and position. A typical example of Boston's new men of wealth was Thomas Hancock, whose grandfather, Nathaniel, had started out as a simple shoemaker with a family of thirteen children to support. Young Thomas began his own career as a bookbinder's apprentice, but he scraped together enough capital to go into his own bookselling business and soon expanded into a substantial trade with England. By the early 1700s he had branched out into a variety of import-export activities with Nova Scotia, the West Indies, England, Holland, and Spain. After building himself a handsome mansion on the slope of Beacon Hill, he was able to bequeath to his nephew and adopted son, John, the modern equivalent of a million dollars. Through thrift, hard work, imagination, shrewdness, and an increasing amount of illegal evasion of the navigation laws, men like Thomas Hancock, John Amory, and James Bowdoin—the last of whom increased his own standing by marrying Elizabeth Erving, daughter of another Boston merchant—assumed positions of respectability and influence. Thomas Boylston acquired the reputation of being the richest man in Massachusetts, and Peter Faneuil, the son of a French Huguenot (Protestant), became such a successful businessman that he offered to build what he called “a noble and complete structure . . . for the sole use and benefit and advantage of the town.” Constructed in 1742, directly behind the Town Dock, Faneuil Hall combined facilities for both commercial transactions and political activities—a dramatic illustration of the close relationship between politics and business in mid-eighteenth-century Boston.

At the turn of the century, the town of Boston also began to take on a design and permanency more in keeping with the affluence of its merchants than the penury of its ministers. In 1691, the selectmen had been authorized to assign and fix the names of the streets. By 1708 the job was done, and Boston was given the names of streets that are still familiar today—Summer, Milk, Beacon, Water,

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Tremont, Brattle, Salem, and scores of others. A number of public buildings originally made of wood were replaced by brick structures, especially after a disastrous fire in 1711. The wooden Town House, for example, was replaced by a more permanent brick structure (today's Old State House) that would house both the town government and the provincial government, and furnish the central exchange for the town's merchants as well. In 1729, the Old South Church replaced its wooden building with the present Old South Meeting House, and in 1754 the present King's Chapel on Tremont Street was erected on the site of the original church. Although the original Faneuil Hall was consumed by fire in 1761, it was soon rebuilt as a two-story brick structure that continued to dominate the waterfront. Instead of the wooden dwellings of an earlier generation, the new men of wealth and influence were now able to construct handsome two- and three-story brick mansions, surrounded by sumptuous gardens and impressive walls, in quiet locations like Hanover Street, Bowdoin Square, Tremont Street, Beacon Street, and Summer Street, conveniently distant from the hustle and bustle of the waterfront.

The town's ministers greatly feared that this constant preoccupation with conducting business, discussing prices, building mansions, and accumulating wealth would cause families to turn away from religion and forget the moral mission of the Bay Colony. "My fathers and brethren," John Higginson had said, addressing the members of his congregation, "this is never to be forgotten, that New England is originally a plantation of religion, not a plantation of trade." In 1706, Cotton Mather published *The Good Old Way*, decrying the lessening of old-time Puritan influences throughout the American colonies, and bemoaning the way in which a new generation of colonists had lost respect and reverence for members of the clergy.

In addition to their concern over the growing preoccupation with financial matters, the town's ministry was also concerned about many of the new ideas and secular opinions that were creeping into the Bay Colony. America was proving hospitable to science and scientists, and in Massachusetts many people involved themselves in such disciplines as astronomy and mathematics because of their obvious importance to the study of navigation. John Winthrop, Jr., for example, had been the outstanding scientist of the early colonial period. In 1631, the governor's son imported a telescope from England through which he observed a fifth satellite of Jupiter. Winthrop also embraced the Copernican system of astronomy, which taught that the sun was the center of the universe, at a time when most authorities still held to the old Ptolemaic system, which

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Cotton Mather, son of Increase Mather, was born in Boston in 1663 and graduated from Harvard College in 1678. He was ordained in 1685 and served with his father at the Second Church until the elder Mather's death, and thereafter as sole pastor for the rest of his life. A scholar and author as well as a Puritan clergyman, his *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702) is considered the greatest American literary accomplishment up to that time. *Courtesy of the Bostonian Society/Old State House.*

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placed the earth at the center of things. By the turn of the century, there were also signs of a new “natural” philosophy beginning to appear in America, strongly influenced by the scientific theories of Sir Isaac Newton, which had been introduced into the colonies as early as 1708. Although Newton accepted that God had created the universe, he also believed that God had laid down the natural laws that governed that universe. Newton said that human beings, through their rational powers and scientific observations, could come to understand the natural and scientific laws (such as gravity) that controlled the universe. Based on these theories, some of Newton’s followers (called deists) concluded that God—often referred to as the First Cause or the Grand Architect—no longer “interfered” in the affairs of man after the initial act of creation. As a result of these ideas, they argued that Divine Revelation was unnecessary, and the Bible was not the literal word of God.

To the Puritan leaders of the colony, these were truly disturbing ideas that not only challenged the validity of the Holy Scriptures and the authority of the established church, but also brought into question the very existence of God. This was a time when Satan was blamed for almost all forms of illnesses, from melancholy to madness. Any extraordinary events that were unexplainable—such as lightning, hurricanes, and shipwrecks—were signs of the Lord’s displeasure. When a farmer had a poor crop, or if his cow broke a leg, it was the work of the devil. In a sermon entitled “Heaven’s Alarm to the World,” Increase Mather stated his belief that the comet of 1680 was a precursor of some terrible calamity. As early as 1681, the New England clergy had met to discuss the dangers of losing church membership as a result of the growth of new “rational” ideas that were beginning to appear in the colony even before Newton’s theories arrived. They decided to combat the problem with proof from the supernatural by documenting all unexplained phenomena such as drought, famines, floods, earthquakes, witchcraft, and diabolical possession. In 1684, Increase Mather wrote a widely discussed document called *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*, which spoke of magicians, witches, and “imps,” and which some historians suggest may well have planted the seed that sprouted into the witchcraft hysteria of the 1690s.

No less confusing to the old Puritan establishment than the growth of materialism and the appearance of rationalism was the way in which women were becoming more of a visibly public presence in the colony. As merchants amassed great wealth through their overseas trading, they formed a new leisure class in which their wives played a more prominent role. More and more women

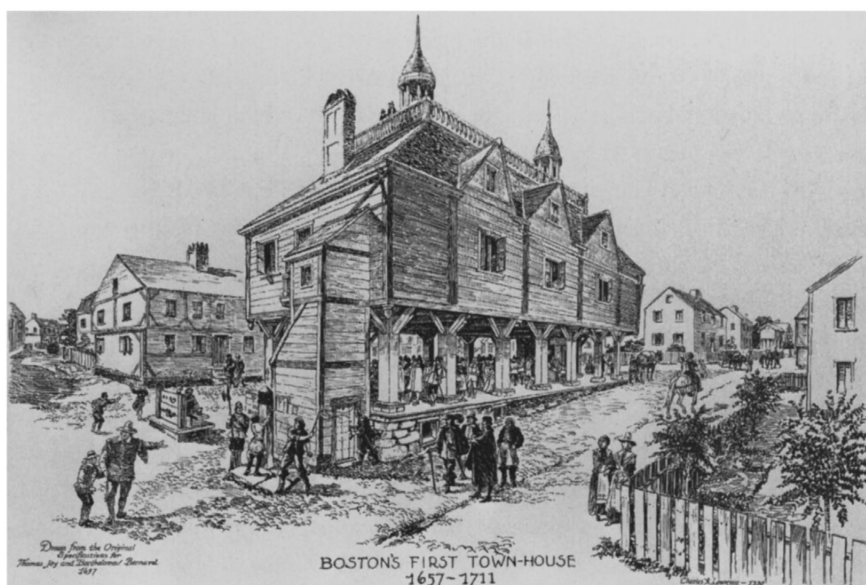
cast off the old Puritan ideal of the industrious woman in favor of the more pleasurable pursuits of high tea, card parties, and parlor games. They could now afford to hire domestic servants from the lower classes to handle domestic duties. Although the underlying social structure of male dominance still remained intact, the women of Boston's new leisure class experienced a great deal more freedom to socialize, to engage in charitable activities, and to choose their own clothes. By 1700, the women of Boston were beginning to forgo the virtue of modesty in dress in favor of more modern fashions. Women were baring their backs, exposing their shoulders, and ornamenting themselves in ways that were heretofore unimaginable. Corsets, elaborate hairpieces, and all kinds of new designs were being brought from Europe through the extensive trade that Boston men were carrying on, and women lost little time in trading in their homespun for the glamour of international fashion. While this plunge into fashion helped facilitate the tendency of men to view women as objects of beauty, it was also an expression of individualism that the women had never before experienced.

As an increasing number of Boston men went to sea, traveled to other parts of the colonies, or spent more time at their places of business during the late 1600s and early 1700s, many women began to take over their husband's affairs, supervise their accounts, and become more knowledgeable about financial matters and world affairs. A number of Boston women also began operating inns and boardinghouses, coffee shops, grocery stores, and bakeries, in order to keep families going while their husbands were away. Even after their husbands returned from sea, however, many women continued to operate their various enterprises, often using their shops to sell goods the men had obtained during their travels. Widows, too, continued the occupations of their deceased husbands or operated shops of their own in Boston to earn a living and keep the family together. In 1754, Mary Salmon advertised in Boston that she would continue operating the blacksmith shop that her deceased husband had owned; another widow, Mary Jackson, advertised that in her foundry shop she could turn out all kinds of pots and kettles. In the face of women's increasing visibility, male authorities continued to express their traditional views about the submissive and essentially inferior nature of the female. In 1692, for example, the Reverend Cotton Mather published his *Ornaments for the Daughters of Zion*, advising young women to learn "all the affairs of housewifery and besides a good skill at her needle, as well as in the kitchen." The Reverend John Cotton also urged wives to stay at home, educate their children, and assist the industry of their husbands. But it was too late. By the 1690s, at least twenty-one women

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were listed as innkeepers in Boston, over half the total number of innkeepers in the town at that time. In addition, six women were awarded liquor licenses and allowed to serve alcoholic beverages at the inns they operated.

By the mid-1700s, there was no question that many individual merchants such as Hancock, Bowdoin, Boylston, and Faneuil had made a great deal of money through their financial enterprises, and had risen to positions of social prominence in the Boston community. After about 1743, however, the overall financial status of the town itself began to decline in a disturbing manner. For one thing, a number of new colonial towns had come into existence throughout America during the hundred years that had passed since Boston's founding. New urban centers such as Philadelphia and New York City were now giving the old Yankee capital a run for its money. In 1760 Philadelphia, with a population of 23,750, and New York City, with a population of 18,000, had already moved ahead of Boston, whose population was recorded at only 15,631 that year. And both these capital cities were continuing to expand, while the population of



In 1657, the first Town House was built at the head of King Street to serve as the meeting place for the General Court. Constructed entirely of wood in the English medieval style, with gables and overhanging upper stories, it burned to the ground in the "great fire" of 1711. It was replaced by a handsome brick colonial structure now known as the Old State House. *Courtesy of the Bostonian Society/Old State House.*

the Bay Colony remained discouragingly stagnant. Boston had also felt the effects of competition from other towns within New England itself. Secondary seaports such as Newburyport and Portsmouth were fast becoming rivals in shipbuilding; Salem and Newport were cutting sharply into the West Indies traffic; Lynn and neighboring villages on the North Shore were taking the butchering and leather trades away from Boston workmen; and Medford was drawing off a greater portion of the rum industry every year. Boston's local economy was suffering, unemployment was rising, and able-bodied workers were heading off to other towns in search of jobs.

To make matters worse, the town's municipal expenses and tax demands began to rise at an abnormal rate—much of this as a result of a series of costly imperial wars between England and France that had erupted after the succession of William and Mary in 1689. These wars were fought not only in continental Europe, but also as far east as India, where French rivals were trying to dislodge powerful English trading companies, and as far west as North America, where French colonial efforts in Canada competed with the buildup of English colonies along the Atlantic coast. The worldwide conflicts between England and France over colonial supremacy began with King William's War in 1689, which ended with the Peace of Ryswick in 1697. Fighting broke out again in 1701 in what was called Queen Anne's War, which concluded with the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713.*

After a quarter century of peace, a third conflict, known as King George's War, broke out in 1740, during which the Massachusetts Bay Colony was called upon to make greater sacrifices in men and money than any of the other American colonies. On the high seas, in actions in the waters of the West Indies, and in the various overland expeditions to invade French Canada, Boston suffered crippling losses of young soldiers and sailors. It also incurred the largest debts and levied the highest taxes, and was forced to support numerous widows and orphans at public expense. Increasing numbers of workmen abandoned Boston and went off to Lynn, Salem, Newburyport, and other Massachusetts towns in search of more favorable sources of income for themselves and their families.

The Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle that ended King George's War in 1748 proved to be so inconclusive that before half a dozen years had passed, Great Britain and France were at each other's throats again. Conflict between French and

* In order to satisfy Mary's insistence that her husband be named king, instead of prince consort, Parliament agreed to make them joint sovereigns. They would reign as William and Mary.

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Peter Faneuil, son of a French Huguenot refugee, became so successful in his business enterprises that in 1740 he offered the town of Boston the necessary funds to construct a large building that could be used both for commercial activities and for political meetings. Erected in 1742, Faneuil Hall stood on the waterfront of the Town Dock. *Courtesy of the Bostonian Society/Old State House.*

American settlers over possession of the fertile lands of the Ohio Valley led to an outbreak of fighting in North America in 1754, which became known as the French and Indian War. This was nearly two years before the conflict in the American wilderness expanded into a global struggle for colonial supremacy—the Seven Years’ War. Events of the ensuing years subjected Americans in general, and Bostonians in particular, to a long and painful emotional ordeal that once again took a heavy toll on the town’s manpower and resources. A stunning series of French military victories—on the European continent, in far-off India, and in North America—weakened the British defenses so severely that most colonials everywhere anticipated a humiliating English surrender at any moment. It was in the midst of this period of insecurity and anxiety that the town of Boston suffered an even more immediate and traumatic experience. An early morning earthquake in November 1755 tumbled thousands of terrified residents out of their beds and brought them running into the streets, just in

time to see a number of large brick buildings come crumbling down. It was almost an omen of more terrible disasters to come, as reports carried the news of one British defeat after another.

Slowly, however, especially after the appointment in 1757 of William Pitt as war minister, Great Britain's military prospects began to improve. A popular member of Parliament with a reputation for honesty, Pitt replaced incompetent old commanders with aggressive young officers. Using British gold to subsidize England's ally, Frederick of Prussia, to conduct military operations on the continent, Pitt shipped British troops to India and to North America as fresh reinforcements. Almost immediately the fortunes of war began to shift in favor of the British and their colonial forces. Starting with the capture of the French stronghold at Fort Louisburg in July 1758, British military and naval forces took the offensive and started pushing the French back on all fronts. By the time the fortress city of Quebec had fallen to General James Wolfe and his force of redcoats in the fall of 1759, and General Jeffrey Amherst had captured Montreal the following spring, the mood of the colonials had swung from deepest depression to wild rejoicing—except that most Bostonians could not join fully in the celebrations. In March 1760, a terrible fire erupted in the center of town near Cornhill, just west of the Town House on King Street, and swept eastward to Dock Square and the waterfront area. By the time the flames had been extinguished and the smoke had cleared, townspeople could see that more than three hundred buildings lay in ashes, stores and ships had been destroyed, and more than a thousand people were left homeless. It was at the time the most disastrous fire in Boston's history.

The effects of this catastrophe were made worse by the long-term effects of Great Britain's seventy-five-year struggle with France. The nine years of the French and Indian War in America, from 1754 to 1763, played havoc with the already unstable Boston economy. Scores of valuable merchant ships had been sunk or captured by the French on the high seas, and income from the Atlantic fisheries had dropped to an all-time low. As a result of the town's peninsula location, winter firewood sold at what seemed a prohibitive figure to inhabitants of moderate and low incomes. Too often, when skilled young workers and their families migrated to nearby towns in search of work, they left behind them those poor, disabled, elderly, and homeless people who contributed little to the tax base, but who put great strains on the local welfare system. Food prices inside the town continued to be high and uncertain compared with those in the countryside, and bankruptcies reached a record high in 1758. Total

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economic collapse was averted only because, as long as the war was in progress, Great Britain was forced to subsidize the wholesale importation of military materiel and the transport of troops. Once the war was over, however, this artificially sustained economic system had to be replaced by normal peacetime competition for markets. The question was: Could Boston regain its economic underpinnings and increase its share of the empire's trade?

The Treaty of Paris in 1763 was the official end of the Seven Years' War. It was a total victory for Great Britain and a humiliating defeat for France, marking the end of France as an imperial power in North America. Britain swept the board, receiving undisputed possession of all territories in North America east of the Mississippi River, including the disputed Ohio Valley region; all of the former French territory in Canada; and all of Spanish Florida. Although the end of the fighting ushered in a period of peace and prosperity for most of the American colonies, Boston's economy failed to show any substantial improvement. In fact, things actually went from bad to worse. Mounting taxes for the care of the poor and the relief of widows and orphans caused grave delinquencies among taxpayers. Many residents were forced to sell off their property in order to pay their taxes and meet their debts, but with so many people still leaving town for better opportunities elsewhere, tenants were hard to come by. And all the while, the town fathers were looking desperately for additional funds with which to maintain their public school system, to straighten and resurface their notoriously crooked streets, and to make the repairs necessary to restore homes, warehouses, and docks after the disastrous fire that had devastated the town only three years earlier.

While other towns in America were expanding rapidly during the years of prosperity following the end of the Seven Years' War, Boston was suffering from depression, unemployment, heavy taxation, a declining population, and a shrinking tax base. The one thing that kept Boston going during the later half of the eighteenth century was the fact that it could still make a brisk livelihood from the sea. Of all the colonial seaports, Boston was still the most active in shipbuilding, cod fishing, and seaborne commerce in general. It still contained some of the most productive distilleries in North America, an industry that depended on a regular supply of molasses from the West Indies. Boston lived on its ships, its wharves, its shipyards, its ropewalks, and its sail lofts. Even for its regular supply of food, it required access by water to the grazing grounds located on the cluster of small islands in the outer harbor, where many Bostonians pastured their cattle and sheep.

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But even this life-giving source of support was destined to disappear all too soon, as relations between the American colonies and their mother country began to break down, and as the specter of separation and independence began to loom in the background. The war had been won. The prolonged conflict between Great Britain and France was now a thing of the past; the French would never return. The results of the peace, however, were destined to bring about consequences that few people on either side of the Atlantic had ever anticipated.

3

From Colony to Commonwealth

WITH the fall of Quebec,” wrote the eminent Boston historian Francis Parkman, “began the history of the United States.” The end of the French and Indian War set in motion a series of events that would eventually lead to a breakdown in civil relations between the American colonies and the British authorities. This disruption was based, in great part, on a total misunderstanding—by each side—of what their transatlantic relationships would be like in a postwar world.

For its part, Great Britain saw the end of the war as a heaven-sent opportunity to reorganize its colonial system, reestablish financial accountability, and bring the colonists themselves under strict imperial control. For generations, Americans had boldly mistreated British officials, ignored official rules and regulations, and openly ridiculed the mercantile system. Political problems at home and conflicts with France abroad persuaded the British to adopt a policy of “let sleeping dogs lie,” the kind of attitude that prevented them from supervising their colonies properly. Now, however, with the conflict between Crown and Parliament a thing of the past, with the Protestant succession safely established, and with France subjected to ignominious defeat, Britain felt free at last to give the American colonies the attention they deserved.

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The newly established monarch, King George III, through the agency of his prime minister, Sir George Grenville, had Parliament pass a series of laws designed to make the recalcitrant colonials observe the letter of the law and help contribute to paying off the enormous war debt that had virtually bankrupted the nation. The Proclamation Act of 1763 prevented the Americans* from crossing the Appalachian Mountains and moving west into the Ohio Valley. At the same time, a permanent garrison of ten thousand British redcoats was established at colonial expense to patrol the Proclamation Line to fend off a bloody war between the native Indians and the incoming settlers, which would ruin the valuable fur trade. The Currency Act of 1764 prohibited Americans from coining and issuing their own forms of money; the Sugar Act, the same year, assigned elements of the royal navy to patrol North American waters and established special Vice Admiralty courts, instead of local colonial courts, to try all cases involving smuggling and illegal trade. The British regarded these Grenville Acts as reasonable and responsible measures by which the colonial system could be restructured, reorganized, and properly financed for the future.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the American colonists responded angrily and defiantly to this series of restrictive laws, which they regarded as absolutely unnecessary and totally unwarranted. Every one of the statutes collided head-on with the hopes and expectations of American settlers in the postwar era. With the imperial wars over and France gone forever as a tangible threat to the security of the North American colonies, colonists could see no reason for not being able to cross the Appalachians and move west into the fertile lands of the Ohio Valley. And they certainly could see no reason for keeping a permanent garrison of redcoats in North America—especially since the haughty disdain displayed by British regular troops toward the rustic colonial militiamen during the war had earned them the title of “lobsterbacks.” The Sugar Act was seen by Americans as a particularly spiteful and unnecessary piece of legislation that threatened to cut deeply into their smuggling activities and bypass their local court system. The act provoked especially strong reaction throughout the town of Boston, where the political atmosphere was becoming dangerously charged.

During the early 1690s, the new Massachusetts Charter promulgated by William and Mary had had the effect of creating a new and more fashionable royal establishment for the province. From their headquarters in the Town House in Boston, Governor Francis Bernard, Lieutenant-Governor Thomas

* The British began referring to the colonial settlers as “Americans” at about this time.

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Hutchinson, and Secretary Andrew Oliver set the proper tone for the younger members of their staffs. Living in stately homes, dressed in elegant clothing, riding in ornate carriages to their country estates, they displayed the lofty affectations of the English court. Although it was true that the governor and other officials were dependent on the General Court for their salaries, the royal establishment could still exercise considerable influence over provincial affairs. During time of war, for example, the governor's control over army and navy contracts was an important force in keeping the town's influential financial leaders in line. The awarding of judgeships and other choice appointments in county government was still another important consideration in assessing the strength of royal power in Massachusetts.

Without the kind of internal organization to provide direction for policy or pressure for appointments, the local town meeting system found it increasingly difficult to stand up for the interests of local inhabitants in the face of royal influence in the General Court. As a result, by 1720 a caucus had appeared in the town—an attempt, says colonial historian G. B. Warden, to provide a “coherent political management for the somewhat loose town meeting.” In the smoke-filled backrooms of local taverns and coffeehouses, gathered together over “punch, wine, pipe and tobacco, biscuit, cheese, etc.,” caucus members laid their plans to make sure that “certain persons” were selected as town meeting members. They also arranged for tax rebates, cultivated occupational groups such as the caulkers and the sail-makers, drew upon social organizations such as the Masons, and instructed the fire and militia companies in how to operate as communications and action networks. In organizing these local associations along political lines, caucus members saw themselves promoting the popular interest in the face of what they viewed as the selfish interests of privileged groups in the royal establishment.

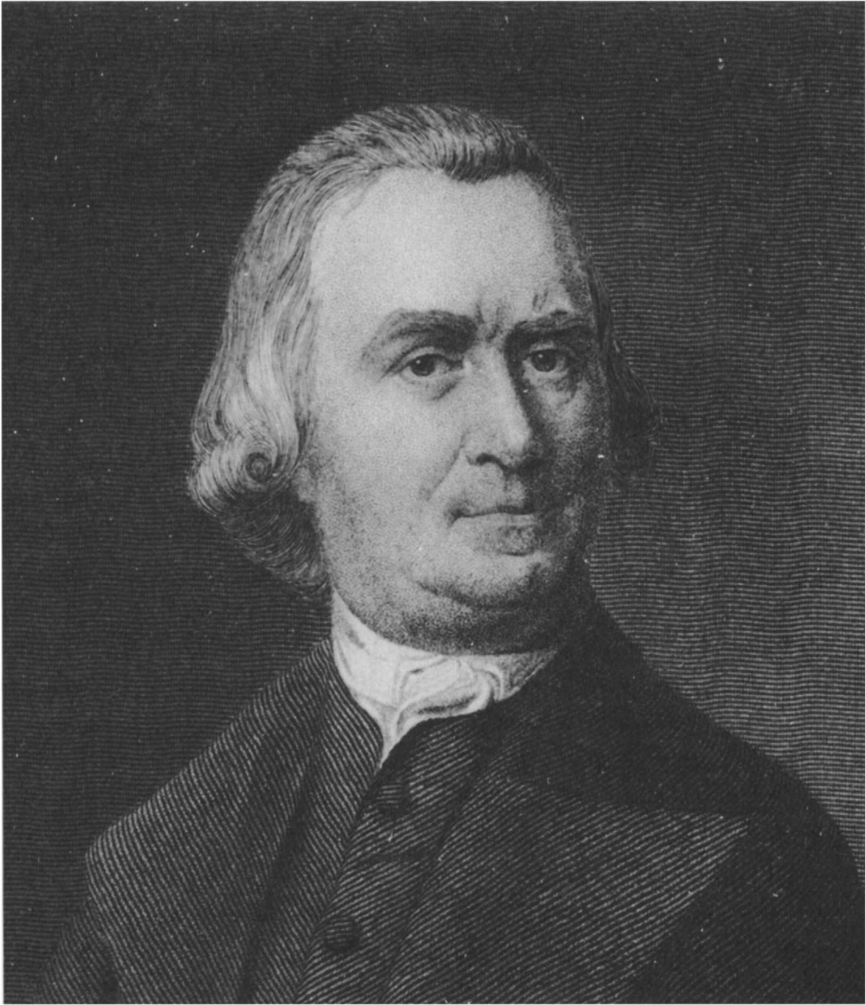
As conflicting interests between the town and the province began to multiply, and as an increasing number of Boston's leaders came from outside the town—John Adams, John Hancock, and Josiah Quincy from Braintree; James Otis from West Barnstable; Joseph Warren from Roxbury—political activists looked for other forms of political organization beyond the town meeting and the caucus to express their views and protect their interests. Groups of Bostonians from all walks of life formed a variety of clubs and associations—the Loyal Nine, the Merchants Club, the Body of the People—through which townspeople could gather in an informal manner to discuss important matters of the day. In this way, they created an unofficial but powerful “third force” in

Boston politics, somewhere between the functions of the General Court and the operations of the town meeting.

By the time the news of the new British imperial policies reached the colonies, therefore, Boston had more than its share of political groups, ready to debate the relative advantages and disadvantages of Parliament's latest actions. At first, the British Coffee House, located on King Street, was a popular place where Crown officers, military men, merchants, lawyers, and men of all points of view met, before differences over British policies divided the town into the Whigs and the Tories. On the south side of King Street was the Bunch of Grapes, which was frequented by the more prosperous members of the local patriot factions, while the Green Dragon on Union Street near Faneuil Hall and the Salutation in the North End were the taverns where the less well-to-do members of the local opposition met to air their grievances. Like Samuel Adams, an emerging political organizer, many people dropped into several of these popular locations in the course of a single day and night, participating in the discussions and carrying the various arguments from one group to another.

It took very little time before the discussions and debates generated in these taverns became known to the general public. By 1764, there were already a number of weekly newspapers published in Boston, but it was the *Boston Gazette*, published each Monday by Benjamin Edes and John Gill, that quickly became the favorite of the town's patriot leaders. In his diary for September 3, 1769, John Adams described how he spent a Sunday evening with his cousin, Samuel Adams, along with James Otis, William Davis, and John Gill, "cooking up paragraphs, articles, occurrences, etc.—working the political engine." Although Samuel Adams had been one of the leaders of the patriot cause for some time, it was not until April 4, 1768, that his first article appeared in the *Gazette*, signed, "A Puritan." From that time on, he used the local newspapers constantly to attack the actions of the governor and Parliament, using such Latin pseudonyms as "*Candidus*," "*Vindex*," "*Populus*," and "*Poplicola*."

In almost every way and in every form, therefore, Boston residents were prepared to protest the ways in which they felt the Grenville Acts were threatening their livelihoods and depriving them of their traditional liberties. The passage in 1764 of the Sugar Act, claimed James Otis, "set the people thinking, in six months, more than they had done in their whole lives before." Otis had already established a reputation for defiant oratory. Four years earlier, in an impassioned four-hour speech, he had denounced the British use of general search warrants, called Writs of Assistance, as a violation of "the immunity of



Samuel Adams displayed an unusual flair for political organization and patriotic agitation. In his Circular Letter he denied the authority of Parliament over the colonies; in his Committee of Correspondence he exchanged vital information with other patriots; and he stirred up popular hatred against British troops that later climaxed with the Boston Massacre of 1770. He served in the Continental Congress and after the war was elected lieutenant-governor of Massachusetts 1789–1793; he then served as governor 1794–1797. *Courtesy of the Boston Public Library, Print Department.*

an English home” and a transgression of basic constitutional principles. Now, with the passage of the Sugar Act, Otis renewed his denunciations, and even Governor Francis Bernard was forced to admit that this latest Grenville Act had caused a greater alarm among the citizens of Boston “than the taking of Fort William in 1757.” Boston merchants, convinced that the act would destroy their lucrative trade in sugar and molasses with the West Indies, formally petitioned Parliament for its repeal.

But colonial reaction to the Sugar Act was nothing compared to the outrage that greeted the passage of the Stamp Act in March 1765, requiring colonists to pay special taxes on all legal and commercial documents. Wills, licenses, contracts, newspapers, almanacs, pamphlets—even playing-cards and dice—were required to bear the tax stamp in order to be considered legal property. The tax itself was designed to raise some £60,000 annually in additional revenue that would be used to offset the expenses involved in colonial defense. Colonials were furious at this latest move by the British Parliament, and local agitators such as James Otis echoed the sentiments expressed by Patrick Henry in the Virginia House of Burgesses that taxation without representation was tyranny. Boston merchants banded together to institute a boycott of British goods, while mobs of angry citizens stoned and looted the homes of Andrew Oliver, the local tax agent; Benjamin Hallowell, the customs collector; and even Thomas Hutchinson, the lieutenant-governor.

With a vigilante organization called the Sons of Liberty whipping up public excitement and threatening effective reprisals, by the fall of 1765 no government official dared distribute the hated tax stamps. The women of the town, too, demonstrated their annoyance at the Stamp Act. They formed their own organization called the Daughters of Liberty, responded to the call for a boycott on all British goods, and called for patriotic Americans to abstain from drinking English tea. They brewed their own home-grown version of “liberty tea” out of local leaves, herbs, and berries. At the suggestion of Massachusetts, delegates from nine other colonies met together in New York City in October 1765. Calling themselves the Stamp Act Congress, they respectfully called upon King George III and the British Parliament to repeal the Stamp Act. Although they professed to acknowledge the overall authority of Parliament in external matters, the Americans denied that Parliament had any right to tax the colonies since the colonists had no specific representation in that body.

Yielding to the growing pressure from English merchants who were now suffering the effects of the American boycott, Britain repealed the obnoxious

Stamp Act in March 1766. When one of John Hancock's ships brought Boston the news of the repeal on Friday, May 16, 1766, it touched off one of the greatest celebrations in the town's history. At the Brattle Street Congregational Church the following Sunday, the Reverend Samuel Cooper preached from the text: "The Lord reigneth: let the earth rejoice," and the citizens prepared to do just that. Although the selectmen designated the next day, Monday, May 19, as the official day of celebration, the townspeople could not wait for the sun to come up. At one o'clock in the morning, they began to ring the church bells, and within a short time almost every bell in town was pealing out the good news. Bands began to play in the darkness, drums started to bang, muskets were discharged into the air, and by the time daylight came, the Liberty Tree, public buildings, and private homes were decorated with flags and bunting. People celebrated all through the day and, according to the diary of town clerk William Cooper, when evening came John Hancock gave a grand "Entertainment" for the "genteel Part" of the town, while treating "the Populace" to pipes of Madeira wine out on his front lawn on the Beacon Hill side of the Common. In front of his house, he erected a staging for an elaborate "illumination," which he touched off every now and then in response to fireworks set off by the Sons of Liberty on the opposite side of the Common. Most Americans felt that the crisis had passed, the confrontation was over, the English had learned their lesson, and the colonies could again live in a kind of peaceful coexistence with the mother country.

And, indeed, for two years after the repeal of the Stamp Act, relations between the American colonies and Great Britain followed what most observers agreed was a fairly peaceful and routine pattern. In 1767, however, Parliament came out with a new series of laws, directed by King George III's recently appointed prime minister, Charles Townshend. This was a new attempt to raise revenue by placing import duties on such imported products as glass, lead, paper, paint, and tea. Since these were regarded as "external" taxes, outside the structure of colonial assemblies, Townshend argued that they had to be accepted by the Americans, who apparently objected only to "internal" taxes. In addition to bringing in more revenue, the Townshend duties would also pay the salaries of most royal government officials in North America, thus freeing them from their longtime dependence on the colonial assemblies, which usually paid their salaries.

For a second time, however, the attempt of Great Britain to raise revenue without going through the wishes of the settlers in their colonial assemblies produced a storm of protest. Following Boston's lead, in March 1768 merchants in

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colonial ports, ranging all the way from Maine to Georgia, formed associations to boycott British goods. Housewives in villages and towns promised not to purchase any of the articles on the Townshend list; the weaving of homespun cloth was promoted as a patriotic enterprise; many communities celebrated public tea-burnings; and Americans everywhere were encouraged to devise local substitutes to replace products they had formerly imported from England. What products they couldn't replace, enterprising Boston merchants smuggled in from such European nations as France, Holland, and Spain.

Once again, Massachusetts was the storm center around which swirled the powerful currents that would move the colonies even further away from the influences of the mother country. Already forty-six-year-old Samuel Adams was moving to the forefront as one of the most energetic and imaginative political leaders in Boston, making a forceful case against the authority of the Crown. He organized committees of correspondence that quickly spread to other colonies and, under his direction, in February 1768 the Massachusetts House of Representatives issued a Circular Letter to the other colonial legislatures denouncing the Townshend Acts as unconstitutional violations of the principle of no taxation without representation. In response to the letter, merchants in New York and Philadelphia organized nonimportation agreements. When the local legislators defiantly refused to obey an order by Lord Hillsborough, the British secretary of state, to rescind the Circular Letter, Governor Francis Bernard promptly dissolved the Massachusetts assembly. In the absence of this representative body, angry mobs of Bostonians moved into the streets to terrorize customs officials, harass royal authorities, and generally make known their displeasure at what they considered illegal and high-handed tactics on the part of British officials.

Convinced that Massachusetts was now in the grip of anarchy, Lord Hillsborough ordered two regiments of British troops stationed in Ireland to embark for North America to establish law and order. When these troops arrived in Boston in early October 1768, marching down King Street in all their impressive glory, the tension between the colonies and the British government escalated to dangerous levels. With nearly four thousand armed redcoats in the small seaport town of only fifteen thousand inhabitants (roughly four soldiers for every civilian), Boston was a powder keg ready to explode. The eruption came on March 5, 1770, a cold, snowy Monday night, when a crowd of locals began throwing snowballs and pieces of ice at a British sentry outside the Custom House on King Street. When Captain Thomas Preston and seven of his men

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came to the aid of the sentry with muskets and bayonets, an angry scuffle ensued between the soldiers and the civilians. Somebody cried “Fire!” and the troops fired into the menacing crowd. When the smoke had cleared, three Boston men lay dead, eight others had been wounded, and two more died a short time later.*

With the town in an uproar over the killings, Lieutenant-Governor Hutchinson sent the British regulars out to Castle Island to avoid further trouble and promised the residents that “the full course of justice” would determine responsibility for the tragedy. When Captain Preston and his men were brought to separate trials for murdering unarmed civilians, John Adams of Braintree agreed to serve as defense counsel. As a result of his capable defense, the British captain was found not guilty of having given the command to fire. The soldiers were also freed, after Adams was able to use the self-defense argument to show that they had been in fear of their lives. Upholding the English common-law tradition of trial by jury, the patriot lawyers had saved the lives of those responsible for the Boston Massacre.†

In an ironic twist of fate, on the very day of the Boston Massacre, Lord North, the newly appointed British prime minister, had moved to repeal the Townshend Acts that had caused so much trouble over the past three years. The colonial boycott of English goods had proved extremely effective, and once again British merchants had exerted pressure on Parliament to make the necessary concessions. Most of them could not justify the cost and inconvenience of enforcing the duties; by 1769–1770, North American nonimportation policies had cut British sales to the colonies by two-thirds. The royal treasury had collected less than £21,000 from its duties, but British businessmen had lost an estimated £1,700,000 in trade. The British government, therefore, agreed to repeal the Townshend Acts—except for the duty on tea. That was retained as a symbol of the “supremacy of Parliament” and a declaration of its right “to govern the colonies.”

Although the British did a great deal to reduce colonial tensions when they repealed the Townshend Acts in March 1770, their stubborn insistence on

* The three men slain that night were Sam Gray, James Caldwell, and Crispus Attucks, an African-American worker from Framingham. The two men who died later were Samuel Maverick and Patrick Carr.

† The “Boston Massacre” got its name from Paul Revere’s cleverly designed engraving that showed British troops deliberately firing into a peaceful group of colonials at the command of an officer’s sword.

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In a variation on Paul Revere's famous engraving of the Boston Massacre, in 1856 J. H. Bufford produced a popular and widely distributed lithograph that focused on Crispus Attucks as an African-American patriot and one of the five men who died in the melee on King Street. As the Civil War approached, black residents of Boston hailed Attucks as a model of heroic resistance and a symbol of black liberation. *Courtesy of the Bostonian Society/Old State House.*

keeping the tax on tea made it possible for local radicals like Samuel Adams to keep their agitation alive, and to wait for the next opportunity to strike a blow for independence. They did not have long to wait. In 1773, the ministry of Lord North passed the Tea Act in an attempt to rescue the British East India Company from bankruptcy, the result of a combination of poor management and an enormous surplus of unsold tea. This act would allow the company to ship its tea directly to North America without paying the usual English export taxes, and then sell the high-grade tea directly to the colonials without going through American middlemen. This meant greater profits for the company and the maintenance of its power in India; it also meant lower prices for the American consumer and a reduction in the amount of widespread tea smuggling. Even though colonials would be required to pay the threepence

Townshend tax, the selling price of the tea in North America would still be half the price paid in England.

Lord North had badly misjudged the colonial temper, however, and his Tea Act provided exactly the kind of provocation for which the radicals were waiting. American merchants suspected a British plot to establish a monopoly on tea and thereby undermine the rising American merchant class. The average colonist saw it as a British trick to seduce Americans into paying the detested Townshend duty on tea. Reactivating the committees of correspondence, Samuel Adams and other radical leaders in seacoast towns along the Atlantic seaboard circulated petitions, organized public opinion, and made preparations to prevent British tea from being brought ashore in North America. Under orders from King George III, however, three ships loaded with tea headed for the Massachusetts colony. The first to arrive was the *Dartmouth*, which docked at Griffin's Wharf on November 28, 1773. A second ship, the *Eleanor*, arrived on December 2; a third, the *Beagle*, was sighted on December 7. This brought matters to a head.

During early December, local patriots held stormy meetings at the Old South Meeting House, demanding that the tea be shipped back to London. When Governor Thomas Hutchinson refused to order the return of the tea ships, Samuel Adams and his supporters took matters into their own hands. On the night of December 16, 1773, after a packed meeting at the Old South, some fifty Bostonians, crudely disguised as Mohawk Indians to prevent any later attempts at identification, led a mob of inhabitants down to Griffin's Wharf where the *Dartmouth* and the *Eleanor*, each carrying 114 chests of tea, were anchored; anchored nearby was the *Beagle* with 112 chests. Altogether the three vessels had more than ninety thousand pounds of dutied tea, worth about £9,000. After boarding the ships and forcing the customs officers ashore, the patriots hauled the chests onto the deck, smashed them open, and poured the loose tea into the waters of Boston Harbor. All the while, a large crowd gathered along the waterfront, watching in silent approval.

British reaction to the Boston Tea Party was both immediate and decisive. It was one thing for the colonials to defy the government in speeches, broadsides, and public demonstrations. It was quite another thing, however, to lay violent hands on property aboard one of His Majesty's ships. In the spring of 1774, Parliament passed a series of measures known as the Coercive Acts, singling out Boston as the chief culprit and moving to destroy both the political and economic leadership of that troublesome town. The Boston Port Bill closed Boston

Harbor to all commerce and trade; the Massachusetts Government Act brought in a military governor, established martial law, and moved the colonial capital from Boston to Salem. The Administration of Justice Act established that all British officials would henceforth be tried in English courts, and the Quartering Act made it possible for British troops to be quartered in private homes. What the Americans called the “Intolerable Acts” were to remain in effect at least until the loss of the valuable tea was paid for, and until the culprits responsible for the Boston Tea Party were apprehended and punished. Defiance had turned to rebellion in Boston; after the Tea Party things would never be the same.

Compounding an already dangerous situation was the fact that in developing plans for the reorganization of its worldwide empire after the defeat of France, the British Parliament passed the Quebec Act in 1774—the same year it passed the Coercive Acts, leading one historian to call it “a good law in bad company.” The Quebec Act reestablished the rights of the Roman Catholic Church, not only in Canada but also in the Ohio Valley territory it had taken from France, as a means of making the process of imperial integration much easier and more humane. Colonists in Boston and throughout New England, however, were infuriated at the idea that the detested papist religion their Puritan forebears had fled England to escape should be allowed to exist in the New World. Many Americans saw the Quebec Act as one more deliberate conspiracy to undermine their religious liberties. In her study *The Old Revolutionaries*, historian Pauline Maier suggests that subsequent colonial demands for independence were based as much on their reaction against Britain’s “softness” on Catholicism as on their opposition to unfair tax laws or the closing of the port of Boston.

The tolling of church bells, the wearing of black mourning bands, the long days of prayer and fasting did nothing to avert or even delay the imperial anger. Precisely at the stroke of noon on June 1, 1774, the Boston Port Act went into effect. From that moment on, Boston Harbor was sealed off from the rest of the world by a tight blockade that would not even allow residents to row their boats across the harbor to the islands where their cattle were pastured. General Thomas Gage, the newly appointed military governor, had been instructed to compel “a full and absolute submission” to the letter of the law. Ships were tied up at the piers, shipyards suspended operations, carpenters were idle, wharves were deserted, and sailors walked the streets of Boston with nothing to do. Porters and stevedores were thrown out of work, mechanics departed to find work in other towns, the great warehouses were shut, mercantile houses had no more business, and the clerks of the town went without pay.

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The population of Boston dropped by the thousands, going from sixteen thousand down to ten thousand, and then to as low as about six thousand, as young patriots left to join the rebel forces in other colonies and family men looked for more promising livelihoods in other parts of the commonwealth. Those who remained in the town, however, showed no signs of remorse and little inclination to change their defiant ways. They would not sell food to Gage's troops, burned up straw that the army could have used for bedding, and refused to construct barracks for the additional regiments that had been sent into Boston to enforce the Coercive Acts. All in all, the local populace more than justified General Gage's frustrated complaint that Bostonians were absolutely "unmanageable."

Hopes faded for a peaceful settlement between the American colonials and British authorities, as both sides became more fixed in their respective positions. In September 1774, American leaders convened a Continental Congress in Philadelphia, where radical delegates such as Samuel Adams called for a showdown with Great Britain. They condemned the Coercive Acts as "unjust, cruel, and unconstitutional," demanded stronger economic reprisals against the mother country, and called for the creation of a continental army. Samuel's cousin, John Adams of Braintree, was also a member of the Continental Congress and was active in working on a statement declaring the reasons that led the American colonies to separate from Great Britain. His wife, Abigail, far from the submissive housewife of the previous century, urged her husband to "remember the ladies" in the statement of rights he was preparing. If congress did not, she warned, then the ladies were prepared to "foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or Representation." On July 18, 1776, a copy of the Declaration of Independence was read from the balcony of the Town House to a crowd of jubilant Bostonians. When the reading was concluded, wrote Abigail to her husband, the cannon was discharged and all the people shouted, "God save our American states!"

The British, for their part, were equally determined not to back down. "We must not retreat," insisted King George III in September 1774, while leaders in Parliament agreed that this time Great Britain must remain firm in the face of the latest incident of colonial defiance. As tensions increased during the winter of 1774–1775, General Gage began receiving unsettling reports that colonials in and around Boston were collecting muskets, cannons, ammunition, and all kinds of other military supplies. Gage decided to move quickly and nip any possible full-scale rebellion in the bud. After notifying British authorities and

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receiving permission to use his own discretion, on the night of April 18, 1775, he sent a force of some eight hundred men to seize a store of military supplies at the town of Concord, about twenty miles northwest of Boston. Alert townspeople, however, closely watching the activities of the British troops stationed on Boston Common, had arranged a system of signals to be flashed by lanterns from the belfry of the town's Old North Church. If the troops marched southward toward Dorchester and Braintree, one lantern would be lit, and if the troops marched toward the Charles River heading for Cambridge, two lanterns would be lit, sending riders ahead to warn the countryside.

The British had hardly reached Lechmere Point when the two-lantern signal sent William Dawes and Paul Revere riding through Charlestown, Medford, and Menotomy, alerting local militia groups that the "regulars" were on their way. By the time the British reached the town of Lexington about daybreak the next morning, they found a small group of seventy armed minutemen drawn up on the green. The British commander ordered the colonials to disperse, shots rang out, and when the smoke had cleared eight Americans lay dead and ten wounded on the Lexington green—the opening shots in what was to become America's war for independence. As the British columns continued their march to Concord, the countryside swarmed with colonial minutemen from all parts of the region who had heard reports about the fighting at Lexington and were waiting for the British to march back from their raid at Concord. There was only one road back to Boston, and the returning British were subjected to a harassing gauntlet of fire from New England farmers lined up behind rocks, fences, trees, and bushes. The British troops barely made it back to the safety of their barracks in Boston, suffering nearly three hundred casualties before the day was over.

Colonials everywhere were outraged by reports (often greatly exaggerated) of the British attacks at Lexington and Concord. They held protest meetings, conducted public demonstrations, and began drilling their local militias. On May 10, 1775, a Second Continental Congress assembled in Philadelphia, and one of its first actions was to appoint a Virginian, George Washington, as commander-in-chief of the colonial forces, which by that time were encamped around Boston.

A month later, on June 17, 1775, General William Howe used the British fleet to land a force of regulars on nearby Charlestown, sweep through the peninsula, and overrun the colonial positions. Learning about the British plans, several American regiments moved into Charlestown Neck and set up fortifications

atop Breed's Hill. Furious at the patriots' actions, Howe ordered a frontal assault, sending some fifteen hundred British troops marching up the hill against the Americans entrenched at the top. Warned not to fire until they could see "the whites of their eyes," the Americans inflicted heavy casualties on the first two assaults. Although the third assault was successful, and the British overwhelmed the defenders, the Battle of Bunker Hill (as it was incorrectly labeled) demonstrated that the clashes at Lexington and at Concord two months earlier had been no accident. This latest confrontation was the tragic prelude to an all-out war. Boston found itself no longer the controversial center of a parliamentary dispute over constitutional issues; it was now an occupied enemy town in the midst of a bitter international conflict between a group of rebellious colonies and their mother country.

The winter of 1775–1776 was severely cold in British-occupied Boston, and the need for fuel was almost as great as the need for food. More than a hundred buildings were pulled down and used for firewood, and the handsome trees that lined Boston Common all had to be sacrificed to the desperate need for fuel. Milk was impossible to obtain; the cost of such items as cheese, bread, butter, and potatoes rose to staggering heights; and meat was generally unavailable at any price. Most of the foodstuffs were brought in by ships of the royal navy—the only vessels allowed to come in and out of Boston Harbor. The provisions were almost immediately consumed by the British soldiers in the town—but not always with happy results. Because of the bad weather, the long journey across the Atlantic, and considerable graft among the British contractors, most of the incoming supplies were not fit to eat. The bread was moldy, the butter rancid, the flour insect-infested, the peas worm-eaten, and the beef crawling with maggots. Hundreds of British soldiers suffered from malnutrition and scurvy, exacerbating the troops' numerous casualties in the Battle of Bunker Hill. To make matters worse, an epidemic of smallpox raged through the town to such an extent that British authorities looked upon the terrible disease as an actual deterrent to any possible attack by the Americans.

While Bostonians and their British overseers were suffering through their winter ordeal, General George Washington arrived to take over his responsibilities as commander-in-chief and was trying to decide the best way of driving the British troops out of Boston. His determination to force an evacuation was further strengthened when Colonel Henry Knox, a Boston bookseller turned artilleryman, arrived with a number of heavy cannons he had dragged through the deep snowdrifts all the way from Fort Ticonderoga in upstate New York.

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With the arrival of these guns in Cambridge on January 24, 1776, Washington began planning his strategy. His first idea was to launch a series of direct assaults against the town across the bay while the winter ice was still deep and hard. Washington's generals would not approve such a risky plan, however, arguing that gaining control of Dorchester Heights on the nearby South Boston peninsula (then called Dorchester Neck) would be safer and more effective. Planting the cannons atop the heights would either force the British to come out of their defenses and fight in the open or evacuate the town completely.

Bowing to the decision of his military council ("I must suppose it to be right," he told John Hancock), Washington began preparations to seize and fortify Dorchester Heights. Under cover of diversionary bombardments from several positions around Boston (Abigail Adams complained that she could hardly get any sleep) on the night of March 4, 1776, General John



General George Washington used the arrival of heavy cannon from Fort Ticonderoga in January 1776 as an opportunity to fortify Dorchester Heights on the nearby South Boston peninsula and force the British to evacuate the town. Transports carrying the 9,000-man British garrison, along with nearly 1,100 American loyalists, sailed away for Nova Scotia. On March 17, 1776, Washington's troops marched into the liberated town, which they found a tragic shambles after the period of British occupation. *Courtesy of the Bostonian Society/Old State House.*

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Thomas commanded a long train of some two thousand American soldiers through Dorchester and across the neck of land that led into the peninsula of South Boston. Working swiftly and silently through the night, by daybreak the colonists had constructed two substantial fortifications on the crest of Dorchester Heights overlooking the town of Boston. To the consternation of the British across the bay, the American cannons menaced not only the British forces in the town itself, but also the numerous British ships riding helplessly at anchor in the harbor. Although Sir William Howe considered launching a counterattack, he thought better of it and decided that evacuation was the only alternative. In return for a British promise not to burn the town, Washington agreed not to fire on the British vessels as they left Boston Harbor. A fleet of 125 warships and transports left Boston Harbor bound for Halifax, Nova Scotia. Aboard were General Howe, some nine thousand officers and men, and more than one thousand loyalists and their families.

On March 17, 1776, General Washington's troops, spearheaded by a contingent of soldiers who had already had smallpox, marched into the liberated town of Boston only to find it a tragic shambles. Trees had been cut down everywhere, fences had been ripped up, and barns and warehouses had been razed to supply the townspeople with firewood. Churches and meetinghouses had been used for stables, private homes had been turned into hospitals, and monuments and public buildings had been shockingly defaced. Slowly and painfully, however, the town began to pull itself together after the ordeal of siege, occupation, and plunder. Houses were repaired, the streets were swept of debris, the churches and meetinghouses were restored to their original uses, the wharves were reclaimed, and the coffee shops were opened again. But the war was still on, and times were still hard. Boston's population, which before the war had reached nearly twenty thousand, had dropped to less than six thousand at the time of the siege. People still lived from hand to mouth, and jobs were so scarce that able-bodied men were forced to earn a living by carrying wood and vegetables into town from the outlying villages. The most the old town could do was look forward to the day when the war would end, the wharves would hum, and the ships would go out to sea once again.

After General Washington's defeat of British forces under the command of General Cornwallis at the Battle of Yorktown on October 19, 1781, Great Britain finally acknowledged the inevitable and negotiated for peace. The Treaty of Paris, recognizing the independence of the United States of America, was formally signed on September 3, 1783. The town of Boston, however, did

not immediately acquire the profits or enjoy the prosperity it hoped would follow the end of the fighting. Money was scarcer than ever; wages and prices skyrocketed in an inflationary spiral that showed no signs of leveling off. Skilled workers were impossible to find. And rents rose to triple their prewar levels. The loss of ships, the lack of manpower, the broken-down state of the shipyards, and the obsolescence of gear that had not been used in seven years made it extremely questionable whether the Bay State would ever again be able to resume its former prominence in such enterprises as fishing, shipping, and overseas commerce.

Many of the economic difficulties afflicting Boston, however, were duplicated in other parts of the commonwealth, and this helped convince many political leaders that the postwar framework of government called the Articles of Confederation would have to be revised and strengthened. Some people felt that if more power were given to the central government, the nation's economy would be more effectively stabilized. After the Revolution ended, a period of deflation set in, forcing down prices and greatly reducing personal incomes. In the western parts of Massachusetts particularly, farmers who had purchased goods, livestock, and farmlands when times were good and money plentiful found themselves in serious trouble now that times were bad and incomes low. The number of mortgage foreclosures and business failures rose to new heights, and many people were imprisoned for failing to pay their debts. Instead of issuing paper money to alleviate the problem, however, the state legislature in Boston ignored the farmers' protests and proceeded to levy even heavier taxes in an attempt to pay off the war debt. By the summer of 1786, mob action had broken out as bands of hard-pressed farmers, headed by Daniel Shays, a former captain in the Continental Army, marched on various courts throughout the western sections of the state and prevented the judges from sitting to hear their cases.

Shays' Rebellion, as it was called, was promptly put down by Governor James Bowdoin, who sent General Benjamin Lincoln with a force of forty-four hundred troops to crush the insurgents. The uprising had important repercussions, however, not only throughout the commonwealth but also throughout the nation. This insurrection, along with many similar disorders among farmers and debtors in other rural sections of the country, had come as a frightening shock to the propertied classes and the well-to-do interests of the newly organized republic. This was precisely the type of "bloody anarchy" they greatly feared. And it helped convince many delegates to the upcoming convention in Philadelphia that a much stronger central government was

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needed. It was only a few months later, on May 25, 1787, that the convention in Philadelphia finally opened, after a sufficient number of delegates had arrived to form the necessary quorum.

In many ways, the four delegates who arrived from Massachusetts reflected the social and economic attitudes that divided the Bay State. Nathaniel Gorham, the most recent president of the Continental Congress, together with the eloquent Rufus King, urged a stronger central government, a vigorous chief executive, and a prosperous national economy. The other two members, however, took much different positions. Caleb Strong, a Northampton lawyer, and Elbridge Gerry, a merchant from Marblehead, spoke out strongly in favor of keeping more power in the hands of the states and of maintaining a greater degree of local autonomy. Although Strong was eventually persuaded to support the new Constitution, Gerry refused to sign the final document, predicting that Massachusetts citizens, “devoted to democracy,” would rise up in revolution against the new Constitution.

At the end of seventeen long, hot weeks—from May 25 to September 17, 1787—only forty-two of the original fifty-five delegates still remained in Philadelphia to put their signatures on the new Constitution of the United States. Three members, including Gerry of Massachusetts, had declined to do so and had returned to their respective states to fight against ratification. Special elections were held in each of the states to elect members of the ratifying conventions. Candidates—Federalists or Antifederalists—were chosen on the basis of their pledges to support the new Constitution or oppose it. At the first session of the General Court during his second administration, Governor John Hancock ordered the secretary to lay this “momentous affair” before the legislators for their consideration. It was then decided that Massachusetts would hold a ratifying convention, which would open in Boston on January 9, 1788. By that date, five states had already voted to ratify the new Constitution. The vote of Massachusetts was considered by many observers to be crucial in deciding the votes of the remaining seven states.

From all parts of the commonwealth, including Maine, 364 delegates made their way to Boston to take part in the convention that many felt would decide the fate of the new Constitution.* The delegation from Boston consisted of

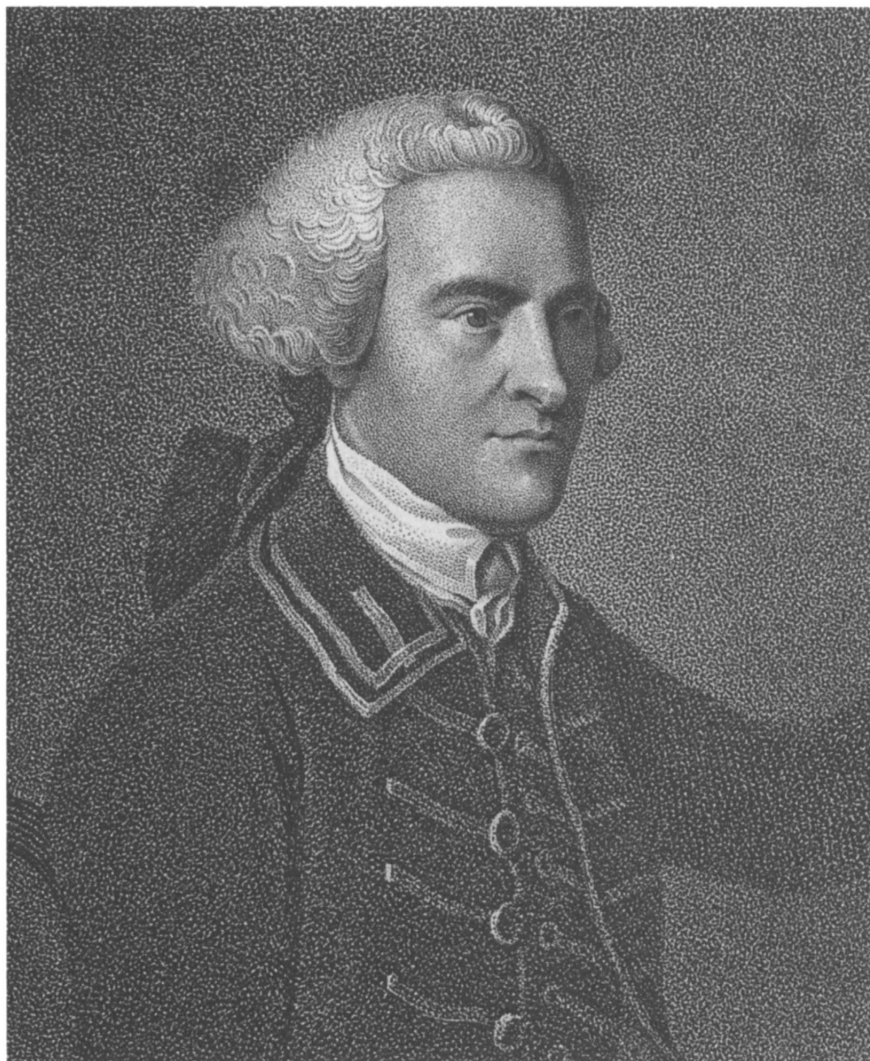
* The colony of Maine had been annexed by Massachusetts in 1677 and continued to remain a political part of the Bay State until the Compromise of 1820. In that year, Maine was admitted to the Union as a free state to balance Missouri, which came in as a slave state.

five members. Three of them—Governor John Hancock, former governor James Bowdoin, and Judge William Sullivan—were known to support the new framework of government; the other two—Samuel Adams and Stephen Higginson—were critical of Hancock and opposed to ratification. Complaining of the gout, Hancock kept to his bed and did not attend the early sessions.

A sharp division of opinion among the delegates was immediately apparent as Antifederalists, representing farmers and former Shaysites from the western counties, continued to blame eastern Federalists for their problems. They expressed their fears that a more powerful national government would diminish the rights of the states and endanger the liberties of the people. Greatly concerned about the numbers and the arguments of their rural opponents, Federalist leaders finally persuaded John Hancock to leave his sickbed and come to the convention hall in person. Helped out of his house and driven across town by coach, the ailing governor made a dramatic entrance “wrapped in his flannels” and carried bodily into the hall.

Taking over as chairman of the convention, Hancock made an effort to bridge the gap between Federalists and Antifederalists, well aware of the Bay State’s strategic importance in the struggle for ratification. If Massachusetts, the second most populous state in the Union at that time, should fail to ratify the Constitution, with New York and Virginia still undecided, then the entire movement to create a new national government might well collapse. Hancock, therefore, proposed a compromise: a “conciliatory proposition” in the form of nine amendments, a sort of Bill of Rights, that he promised would be added to the Constitution after it had been ratified. One amendment would prohibit Americans from accepting offices or titles from foreign governments; another would allow direct taxes only when there were no other sources of revenue available; still another would allow Congress to regulate elections only when the states had neglected to do so. But perhaps the most important—one that would later appear in slightly different form in the Tenth Amendment—was Hancock’s proposal calling for powers not expressly delegated to the national government to be reserved to the states.

Hancock’s proposals, together with their public support by Samuel Adams, shifted the balance of power within the convention. Support for the new Constitution, with the understanding that amendments protecting the rights of the states would be added later, gradually built up among the delegates. When the final vote was called late in the afternoon of February 6, 1788, the vote was 187 yes, 168 no. By the narrow margin of 19 votes, Massachusetts



John Hancock was born in Braintree, Massachusetts, in 1737, and after graduating from Harvard in 1754 became a successful merchant. Hancock became actively involved in political activities against the Crown and was president of the Continental Congress when he signed the Declaration of Independence. He supported the ratification of the new Constitution of the United States, and in 1780 he was elected first governor of the state of Massachusetts, serving nine terms in that post until his death in 1793. *Courtesy of the Bostonian Society/Old State House.*

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had become the sixth state to ratify the Constitution of the United States, and was now a member of what everyone hoped would truly be a more perfect Union.

The announcement that the convention had voted in favor of ratification produced a wave of jubilation and good fellowship throughout Boston. Bells in public buildings and churches pealed out the good news, and for several days the town of Boston resounded to the noise of booming cannon-fire and other “demonstrations of joy.” At the call of the local Committee of Tradesmen, large numbers of laborers, craftsmen, tradesmen, and mechanics showed up at nine o’clock the next morning in front of Faneuil Hall to begin a “Grand Procession” through the streets of Boston. There were bands of foresters with their axes, followed by yokes of oxen and clusters of horse-drawn harrows. Sowers, mowers, and winnowers marched along carrying hoes, spades, and scythes, while blacksmiths, shipwrights, rope-makers, painters, carvers, and riggers testified to the maritime character of the town. Midway in the procession came a large float of the good ship *Federal Constitution*, drawn by thirteen horses and followed by ship captains, sailors, and merchants. A little farther on came another float, the old ship of state *Old Confederation*, symbolically hauled up for repairs, with carpenters working on its crippled hull.

It was a gala parade that stopped every now and then in front of the house of some distinguished citizen of the town to give three cheers and fire a salute. As the marchers reached the vicinity of the Old State House about two o’clock, they halted and proclaimed that Long Lane, the site of the ratifying convention, would henceforth be called Federal Street. About four o’clock, the procession arrived back at its starting point in front of Faneuil Hall, where refreshments were liberally provided. Later that evening, the vessel *Old Confederation* was hauled up to Boston Common, officially declared to be “unfit for further service,” and set afire. A huge bonfire lit up the night sky and brought the day’s celebrations to what the spectators all agreed was a fitting conclusion.

While Boston was making the transition from the excitement of revolution to the stability of nationhood under a new Constitution, a new cluster of leaders took over the direction of state and local affairs. With the disappearance of British administrators and Tory bureaucrats, a political vacuum had been created that was quickly filled by a group of well-known Bostonians, who now moved up from levels of financial wealth and social influence to positions of political power and legislative prominence. After the war, for example, John

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Hancock, one of the town's most successful merchants and entrepreneurs, became governor of the state from 1780 to 1793, except for the years 1785–1787, when James Bowdoin served two terms. Thomas Cushing, a close friend of Hancock and a former member of the town's Merchants Club, served as lieutenant-governor from 1780 to 1788. Samuel Adams, who had failed in a number of business ventures before the Revolution, found political fulfillment as lieutenant-governor from 1789 to 1793, and then as governor from 1794 to 1797, after Hancock's death. James Bowdoin, who was active in postrevolutionary politics, and served briefly as governor from 1785 to 1787, came from a distinctly mercantile background, as did Stephen Higginson and James Warren, who regularly opposed the Federalist policies of John Hancock. Elbridge Gerry had started out in the family shipping business on the North Shore before making politics his career, and Thomas Handasyd Perkins continued to pursue his profitable commercial enterprises while becoming active as a Federalist legislator in the postwar era.

A number of small-town lawyers of local repute, too, found the postwar years a time of unparalleled opportunity for moving up into positions of greater power and influence after British jurists left the scene. Josiah Quincy of Boston and Fisher Ames of Dedham found seats in the new U.S. Congress. Harrison Gray Otis, a young lawyer whose father had been ruined by the Revolution, now went on to political prominence in both the House and the Senate. Theophilus Parsons of Newburyport left his law practice in Boston to become Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court. And John Adams, after serving as America's first minister to Great Britain, would shortly reach the pinnacle of success, first as vice-president, and then as president of the United States in 1796.

By the time the national elections had been held in the fall of 1788, and the new government of President George Washington was under way in the spring of 1789, a new political oligarchy had firmly established itself in power. In line with the orderly process of Federalism created by Alexander Hamilton at the national level, a new Federalist aristocracy in Boston was content to retain the class structure that had characterized its society over the past century and a half. Once Bostonians had driven out their British overlords and achieved national independence, they were satisfied that for all practical purposes the rebellion was over—their “revolution” was complete. Assuming that their colonial traditions—religious orthodoxy, social integrity, and political responsibility—would remain intact, they anticipated no further

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surprises. Hamilton's policy of government by "the wise, the well-born, and the good," combined with his stake-in-government principle that wedded the stability of the new nation to the prosperity of its financial leaders, was perfectly consistent with the views of local Federalists. Boston's new political leaders were satisfied that God was in His Heaven, and that all was right with His world—and with theirs.

BOOK TWO
Athens of America



4

From Town to City

WITH the Revolution over, independence won, a new Constitution in place, and a federal aristocracy in charge of things, by the 1790s the town of Boston began to regain an air of confidence and assume a spirit of achievement. Already many of the town's streets had been named after such patriotic leaders as John Hancock, Benjamin Franklin, James Bowdoin, James Warren, and Thomas Cushing, while others were changed to more appropriate titles. King Street, for example, now became State Street, Queen Street was changed to Court Street, Long Lane had become Federal Street, and the wide road that ran through the main part of town across the Neck was now called Washington Street. Boston, it was quite clear, was becoming thoroughly Americanized.

Fortunately for Boston, economic conditions began to improve once political stability had been established. The period of runaway prices and foreign rivalry that had characterized the immediate postwar period proved only a temporary setback to the town's maritime prosperity. Yankee skippers found ways to evade British trade regulations and renew their valuable trade with the West Indies. The Caribbean Islands supplied large quantities of cocoa, sugar, tobacco, and molasses, so greatly in demand throughout the Bay State. In return,

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Yankees supplied badly needed outlets for the codfish, whale oil, lumber, and rough manufactured goods of the entire New England region. One enterprising young man, Frederick Tudor, pioneered the business of shipping thousands of tons of ice annually from Boston to Charleston, Savannah, and New Orleans, and then on to the tropical countries of the West Indies and the Far East. For the first time in many years, money started to become available in large enough amounts to revive old industries, expand new ones, and adjust the balance of payments that had drained Massachusetts of almost all its specie.

As the town's economy began to revive during the late 1790s and early 1800s, local entrepreneurs began to branch out into more ambitious overseas activities. In addition to the valuable West Indies trade, Yankee whalers and fur traders found the eastern waters of South America a most lucrative source of commercial profits. When the outbreak of the Napoleonic wars between England and France in the early 1800s made a normal traffic with Europe too hazardous, many Americans opened up markets at Rio de Janeiro and along the River Plate for the exchange of such commodities as hides and lumber. More enterprising skippers made their way even farther down the South Atlantic, through the Straits of Magellan, and then up along the western shores of South America and into the waters of the Pacific to explore the rich China market.

By 1800, too, Boston vessels, loaded with copper, cloth, trinkets, and clothing of all sorts, were making regular voyages to the Columbia River, along what is now the Washington-Oregon border. After bargaining their wares with the Indians in exchange for otter skins and furs, they would sail across the Pacific, with frequent stops at the Hawaiian Islands and the Sandwich Islands, to finally dispose of their goods in China. Then they made their way home around the southern tip of Africa (there was no Suez Canal then) and across the stormy Atlantic with cargoes of Chinese teas, colorful silks, and delicate porcelains so much in demand by the well-to-do families back in Boston. The aromas of exotic spices wafted through parts of town, little monkeys became stylish as household pets, and new fabrics were available for personal adornment.

The growing prosperity of the town in the late 1790s and early 1800s was reflected in both the growth of its citizenry and the expansion of its living space. From an all-time low of six thousand during the period of British occupation, by 1790 the population of Boston had risen to eighteen thousand. In 1800 it was recorded at twenty-five thousand, and by 1810 it had gone well beyond thirty thousand—a fivefold increase in only thirty-five years. Considering the fact that the old town still looked like a small, half-inflated balloon attached

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After the American Revolution was over and the new Constitution established, Bostonians returned to the sea in an effort to restore the town's badly shattered economy. During the early 1800s, Yankee skippers sought out more ambitious overseas activities, exploring the shores of South America, venturing out into the Pacific, and arriving at the ports of China. The growing prosperity of the town was reflected in a growing population that passed the thirty thousand mark in 1810. *Courtesy of the Bostonian Society/Old State House.*

to the mainland only by a thin stretch of mudflats, this remarkable increase forced a series of changes, not only to accommodate the rising numbers, but also to make up for the deteriorating conditions in the older parts of town. What had once been a small, pleasant, somewhat rustic colonial town was fast becoming an uncomfortably crowded and congested urban metropolis. A number of well-to-do merchants, businessmen, lawyers, and retired sea captains had already started to move away from the cluttered and unsightly district around the waterfront and the Town Dock. They were building new homes farther away in such areas as the South End and the West End, which soon became fashionable residential districts with substantial brick buildings and carefully cultivated gardens.

A young architect who was most instrumental in effecting many of the changes that came about during the late 1790s and early 1800s was Charles Bulfinch. Son of a prominent Boston physician and a graduate of the Boston Latin School and Harvard College, Bulfinch worked in a countinghouse before

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making a two-year tour of Europe. While in France, he was struck by the beauty of town planning in Paris, with its public parks and its tree-lined boulevards. In England, he was impressed by the work of Sir Christopher Wren in London, as well as the stylistic designs of the Adam brothers in the town of Bath. Returning to Boston in 1787, he began to apply his ideas to the architecture of his hometown in such an enthusiastic manner that he came close to transforming the whole tone and character of Boston almost single-handedly.

Young Bulfinch first made his mark by designing handsome mansions for well-known citizens who were anxious to move out of the old parts of town and settle in the open spaces of the West End. In 1792, he built a three-story brick house between Temple and Bowdoin Streets for his relative Joseph Coolidge; four years later, he built another three-story mansion at the corner of Cambridge and Lynde Streets for Harrison Gray Otis, a successful lawyer and real estate investor. In 1815, Bulfinch built a handsome set of double houses made of granite for Samuel Parkman between Cambridge and Green Streets, near Bowdoin Square. The young architect did not restrict himself to the West End area, however; he made his influence felt in other parts of the town as well. In 1804, for example, he designed a large four-story mansion for the wealthy merchant Thomas Amory on the corner of Park and Beacon Streets. The following year, he built a row of four uniform, attached townhouses along Park Street, with a long wrought-iron balcony under the second-floor dining room windows.

In addition to private homes, Charles Bulfinch also involved himself with several local commercial enterprises. In 1805, he designed a series of warehouses, wharves, and stores along the waterfront district in the area of Long Wharf at the end of State Street. The same year, he rebuilt and enlarged old Faneuil Hall, doubling the width of the building, adding a third story, and moving the cupola from the middle of the building to the front. In 1810, he built the new Boylston Market on the corner of Washington and Boylston Streets for the residents of the South End; the same year, he designed a large market building on the corner of Cambridge and Green Streets to accommodate residents of the West End.

Bulfinch also turned his hand to the construction of churches. After building the Hollis Street Church, with its two domed towers and domed ceiling, in 1800 he went on to design free of charge for Boston's first Catholic bishop, Jean Cheverus, the first Catholic church in New England. Located on Franklin Street, it was made of red brick with white Italian-classic details, and

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was completed in 1803 to serve the town's small Catholic population. In 1804, he built another church on Hanover Street in the North End. Made of red brick, with white pilasters on the façade and topped by a clock tower and a belfry, it was originally designed for the New North Religious Society but later passed into the hands of Catholics, who transformed it into St. Stephen's Church.

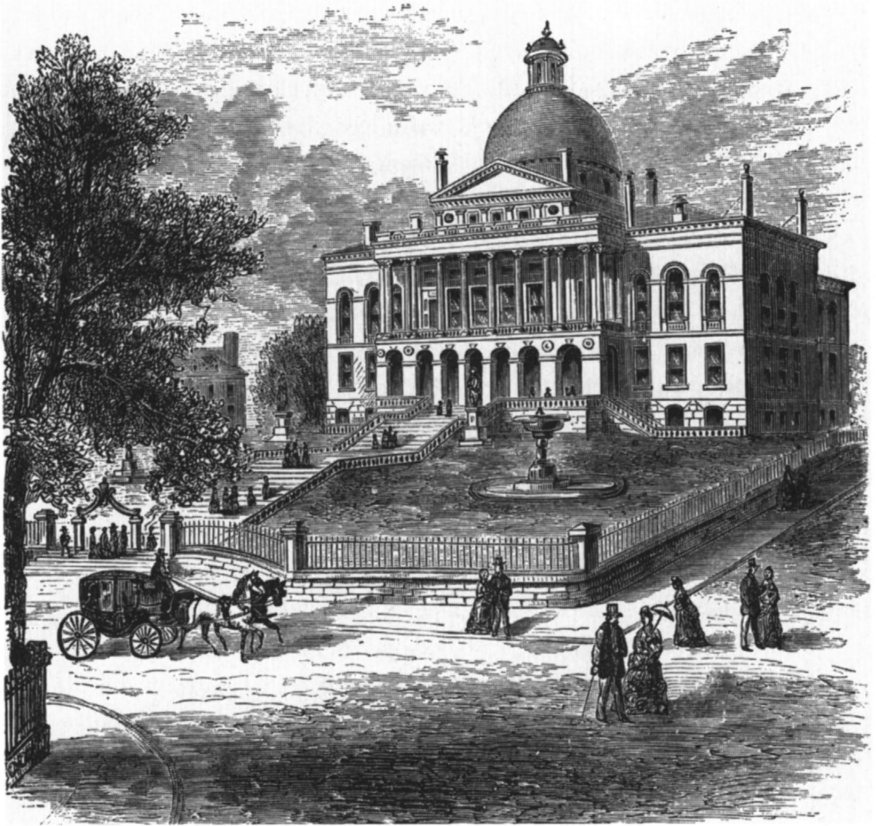
Of more long-range significance than Bulfinch's efforts at designing individual structures were his imaginative plans regarding real estate development and urban planning. In 1793, in an area behind Summer Street, Bulfinch set about building the first block of connected townhouses in a project called the Tontine Crescent.* The curved unit, five hundred feet long and containing sixteen houses, was erected on Franklin Street. The handsome houses were brick, painted gray, with recessed arches framing the first-floor windows and pilasters on the faces above. The crescent rose to a slightly higher level in the center and had a large arch that spanned a passageway, which passed entirely through the structure. In front of the crescent was a small tree-shaded park, enclosed by a wrought-iron fence, with a large urn in the center in honor of Benjamin Franklin.

While the Tontine Crescent was an exciting experiment in urban development, and perhaps a forerunner of the modern condominium, in the short run it proved to be a costly venture. Lack of investors in the project brought bankruptcy to Charles Bulfinch and his family, and even caused the young architect to spend some time in jail for debt. He was not discouraged, however, and continued to explore new undertakings. In 1810, for example, he built a row of attached townhouses, known as Colonnade Row, that extended along Tremont Street from West to Mason Streets, directly across from Boston Common. This imposing structure had a Doric colonnade, with a delicate wrought-iron balcony under the long dining room windows of the second floor, from which residents could look out across the Common to see the sun setting in the west.

But perhaps the most distinctive and permanent additions Bulfinch made to the Boston landscape were his design of the new State House and his architectural influence on the subsequent development of the whole Beacon

* The name Tontine was used because the money for the enterprise was to be raised by selling shares of stock to members of the public, who would later share in the profits from the sale of the homes. Lorenzo Tonti, an Italian banker, gave his name to this kind of arrangement, which he introduced in France in the seventeenth century.

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Once free of British rule, Bostonians wanted their own seat of government. Charles Bulfinch, a young Boston architect, was commissioned to design and construct a new State House on the crest of Beacon Hill. This new structure helped stimulate a wave of housing construction that created an entirely new and fashionable residential district for many of Boston's more prosperous families in the center of the town. *Courtesy of the Bostonian Society/Old State House.*

Hill area. Bulfinch had sketched designs for a new state capitol as early as 1787—only four years after America had won its independence from Great Britain. After the war, Bostonians continued to use the old provincial Town House for the conduct of state business, but it was clear that they wanted a new state house of their own, not one to which memories of British authority were still painfully attached. In 1795, two years after John Hancock's death, the town purchased Hancock's pastureland on the slope of Beacon Hill as the site for a

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new state office building. Charles Bulfinch, already well known for the houses he had built for prominent merchants, was selected as the appropriate architect for the project. In 1798 he completed his new State House, providing the town with an impressive redbrick building with white marble trim, a long flight of stone steps, and an imposing golden dome that would eventually become a distinctive landmark of the city.

News that the new capitol would be constructed on the crest of Beacon Hill immediately produced other changes in the rustic surroundings of nearby Park Street and Tremont Street, where hay carts rumbled and cattle still grazed. Within a dozen years, the whole area was in the midst of rapid development, transforming the old Puritan town of wood and thatch into a new Federal-style capital of stone and granite. One particularly dramatic change came when a group of investors, calling themselves the Mount Vernon Proprietors, bought up the extensive Beacon Hill farmlands belonging to the well-known portrait painter John Singleton Copley, who had gone off to England during the Revolution. Using that parcel of land, they began to transform the southwest slope of the hill into a new residential district. Hilly pastureland that had not been especially valuable until the new State House was built now became prime real estate. After laying out a system of streets to accommodate blocks of townhouses, in the summer of 1799 the Proprietors lopped off fifty or sixty feet from the top of Mount Vernon with the use of small gravity cars, which dumped the fill from the top of the hill into the waters at the foot of Charles Street. This made more usable land for the Proprietors at the top, created new property for the town at the bottom, and provided an enjoyable pastime for spectators who gathered regularly to watch the operations.

As the houses began to go up in the new Beacon Hill development, the architectural influence of Charles Bulfinch once again became apparent. Earlier houses had been built by some of the Mount Vernon Proprietors for their own use, and probably to stimulate further construction in the neighborhood as well. Between 1806 and 1812, fifteen houses were built on the old Copley property, giving the new area a distinctive atmosphere. One of the first of these houses was the second mansion designed by Bulfinch, in 1802, for Harrison Gray Otis—a brick house with white classical trim—on what is now Mount Vernon Street. Four years later, Bulfinch designed a third mansion for the Otis family at 45 Beacon Street, a four-story brick house with white trim, on the slope of Beacon Hill overlooking the Common. In addition to providing a mansion for Stephen Higginson, Jr., at 87 Mount Vernon Street, Bulfinch

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also constructed several townhouses on Chestnut Street, with brick stables in the rear.

Besides Bulfinch, there were several other architects who contributed to the changing character of the town. Asher Benjamin, for example, was another well-known Federalist architect who, like Bulfinch, had been influenced by the classical style of late Georgian England. He worked first in western Massachusetts, but lived and worked in Boston from 1803 until his death in 1845. Benjamin added to the new buildings going up in the West End with his construction in 1809 of the West Church on Cambridge Street. This was a lovely Federal-style church, constructed of red brick, that had a triple portal and a belfry that terminated in a dome topped by a weather vane. Not too far away, Benjamin built another church, on lower Mount Vernon Street at the corner of Charles Street—the Charles Street Meeting House. This was also a redbrick structure with arched doorways, a belfry, a cupola, a dome, and a weather vane. One of the most distinctive churches erected at this time was the work of Peter Banner, an Englishman who worked in Boston from 1806 to 1828. This was the Park Street Church, constructed in 1809 on the corner of Park and Tremont Streets, next to the Old Granary Burying Ground on one side, and overlooking Boston Common on the other. The graceful white steeple of this Congregational church quickly became a landmark of the new residential area of the town, and a permanent feature of Boston's architectural renaissance on the western side of Tremont Street.

These new private residences, public buildings, marketplaces, warehouses, townhouses, and churches not only provided the town with new, bright, modern, and substantial structures, but they also helped emphasize the fact that the center of gravity in the town had shifted perceptively. Before the Revolutionary War, the political, financial, and religious focus of the town had centered on the area bounded by the waterfront, the market district, Faneuil Hall, the Old South Meeting House, and the Old State House. By the early 1800s, however, the center of power was already beginning to move across Tremont Street to Park Street, Beacon Hill, and the new State House. Whether this would be a permanent change, or only a temporary fluctuation, only time would tell.

Members of Boston's Federalist aristocracy may have been pleased with their improving financial status and delighted with the physical improvements taking place in their town, but they were greatly disturbed about the political changes taking place in the nation's capital. In November 1800, Thomas Jefferson and his Democratic-Republican supporters defeated John Adams of

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Massachusetts and the members of the conservative Federalist party. The results of this political turnover had devastating effects on the immediate mood and the future prospects of the Boston oligarchy. Before 1800, Massachusetts had been in the forefront of American affairs—articulating the defiance, organizing the rebellion, fighting the Revolution, forming the Confederation, designing the Constitution, implementing the new Federal republic. After 1800, however, it quickly became evident that the Bay State was having much less influence on national policies at home or abroad. Massachusetts congressmen spoke out regularly in opposition to Jefferson's restrictive fiscal policies, opposed his purchase of the Louisiana territory in 1803, condemned his ill-advised Embargo of 1807 that put an end to overseas shipping, and took a strong public stand against his foreign policy measures that they feared would eventually lead to war. But their objections were regularly voted down by Republican supporters from the South and the West, or scornfully rejected out of hand. After 1800, with the single exception of John Quincy Adams, no Bay State figure would play an influential role on the national scene until Daniel Webster emerged as a prominent Washington statesman a quarter of a century later.

Even worse than the states-rights political agenda of the new Jefferson Democrats in Washington were the social and economic principles enunciated by the Virginia leader, which conservatives believed would bring ruin to the Federal establishment. Federalists feared that Jefferson would surely dismantle Alexander Hamilton's centralized authority and orderly political structure, and hand power back to the states and to the masses of the people. Jefferson's strong belief in the superiority of yeoman farmers and the values of the agrarian way of life would undoubtedly cause commerce to suffer, banks to fail, and property values to tumble. The Virginian's sympathy for revolutionary France and its bloodthirsty leaders might well involve the United States in a war with Great Britain. What were regarded as his "atheistic" views, his liberal political attitudes, and his "radical" philosophies, drawn in great part from suspiciously foreign and decidedly "alien" sources, caused Boston Federalists to bemoan the loss of all moral standards and despair of the future of the republic. To most Federalists, as one historian put it, Thomas Jefferson was "the political devil incarnate."

Already, anxious conservatives could see the unsettling results of liberal ideas and secular philosophies in the changing religious trends taking place within the Bay State. Old Calvinistic views concerning the vengeance of God, the depravity of man, and the salvation of none but the "elect" had not been

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able to keep pace with the democratic spirit of the nation and the natural optimism of people who had carved a civilization out of the wilderness and then secured their own independence. Americans were extremely proud of what they had accomplished and could no longer conceive of themselves as depraved sinners, doomed to eternal damnation by a vengeful God. Surely in the new American Republic there must be a more enlightened road to salvation for everyone. Without questioning either the existence of the Almighty or the authority of the Bible, a new religious group called the Unitarians had begun to attract attention as they placed greater emphasis on the beneficence of God, the innate goodness of man, and the availability of salvation to all souls. At a time, too, when Newtonian science was having a significant impact on the thinking of intelligent men and women, the Unitarians accepted the importance of human reason and conceived of a truly Godly community that would operate in a rational, orderly manner in accordance with the natural laws designed by the Almighty.

Some indication of the speed with which Unitarianism took hold can be seen in the fact that by the early 1800s, nearly all Congregational pulpits in and around Boston had been taken over by Unitarian preachers. Nathaniel Frothingham was at the First Church; John Gorham Palfrey, historian and future Dexter Professor of Sacred Literature, served at the Brattle Street Unitarian Church. Francis Parkman held forth at the New North; the eloquent William Ellery Channing enunciated his gospel of the "adoration of goodness" at the Federal Street Church. When Henry Ware, who preached at the Second Church, was named Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard College, it was clear that the preeminence of Congregationalism as an intellectual and theological force was a thing of the past. At this point, many old-line Federalists, most of them Harvard graduates, withdrew in disgust from active political involvement. Convinced that the godless were in the ascendancy, and that the nation was doomed beyond all hope of redemption, a number of them retired to the seclusion of their mansions to read the classics, cultivate their roses, and reflect on the folly of mankind.

The worst fears of the New England Federalists were realized on June 18, 1812, when, at the urging of Jefferson's successor, President James Madison, both houses of Congress voted in favor of war against Great Britain. With the start of the War of 1812, political activity in the Northeast came alive once again and took on new vehemence in its attacks on the Republican administration. Federalist leaders throughout New England publicly opposed what they contemptuously

called “Jimmy Madison’s War” from the very start. They refused to supply either men or money for a conflict they considered unjust and immoral. The lower house of the Massachusetts General Court issued an address urging the people of America to organize a new peace party and “let all other party distinctions vanish.” Governor Caleb Strong followed up by proclaiming a public fast in order to atone for a declaration of war “against a nation from which we are descended, and which for many generations has been the bulwark of the religion we profess.” Most of the old Boston families supported the governor’s opposition, and members of the Harvard Corporation—President Kirkland and Treasurer Davis, together with fellows Lathrop, Lowell, Phillips, Gore, and Chauncy—announced themselves in agreement with the “ANTI-WAR POSITION” of the Federalist party.

There were other New Englanders, however, who felt that words alone were not enough to head off disaster. In Massachusetts, a group of determined Federalists, headed by Senator Timothy Pickering of Salem and known as the Essex Junto, decided that the only recourse was for Federalists to secede from the Union and form a separate “Northern Confederacy” made up of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and the New England states. However, this extreme solution found little support among most rank-and-file members of the Federalist party, who preferred to remain in the Union and work through established political channels. But with the continued victories of British men-of-war on the high seas, the success of the British naval blockade along the Atlantic seacoast, and the shocking attack on the nation’s capital in late August 1814, Federalists were finally persuaded to take more drastic action. On December 15, 1814, the Massachusetts legislature called for a convention of the New England states at Hartford, Connecticut, to protest the continuation of the war and to consider actions against the Madison administration. For three weeks, delegates at this Hartford Convention debated whether to secede from the Union or make a separate peace with Great Britain. Although moderates finally overruled those who wanted secession, they decided to present the Madison administration with a series of constitutional amendments designed to end the war, restore the dominance of New England, and advance its commercial interests. Their recommendations included the repeal of the three-fifths compromise and a requirement that a two-thirds majority in Congress would be necessary to declare war, restrict foreign trade, and admit new states to the Union.

Just as the delegates from the Hartford Convention reached Washington, D.C., to present their proposals to the administration, however, they learned

that the war had ended. News had just arrived that on January 8, 1815, General Andrew Jackson and his frontier troops had inflicted a disastrous defeat on the British forces at the Battle of New Orleans. This was followed by reports that a peace treaty between the United States and Great Britain had been concluded two weeks earlier (December 24, 1814) at the Belgian town of Ghent. President Madison paid no attention to the malcontents from New England, who were regarded with derision, and the entire country now turned against the Federalist party, which was labeled “the party of treason” because of the way in which it refused to assist the nation in its hour of peril. From this point on, it was difficult for any New Englander to admit to being a card-carrying member of a political party that had worked so openly against the national government, and that had refused to supply money or men for the national defense. Although there would always be a handful of crusty old Bostonians who would insist to their dying day that they were dyed-in-the-wool Federalists, for all practical purposes the party was dead. Officially, the old Federalist party passed into obscurity, and an important phase of Boston history came to an abrupt, and some would have said an ignominious, end.

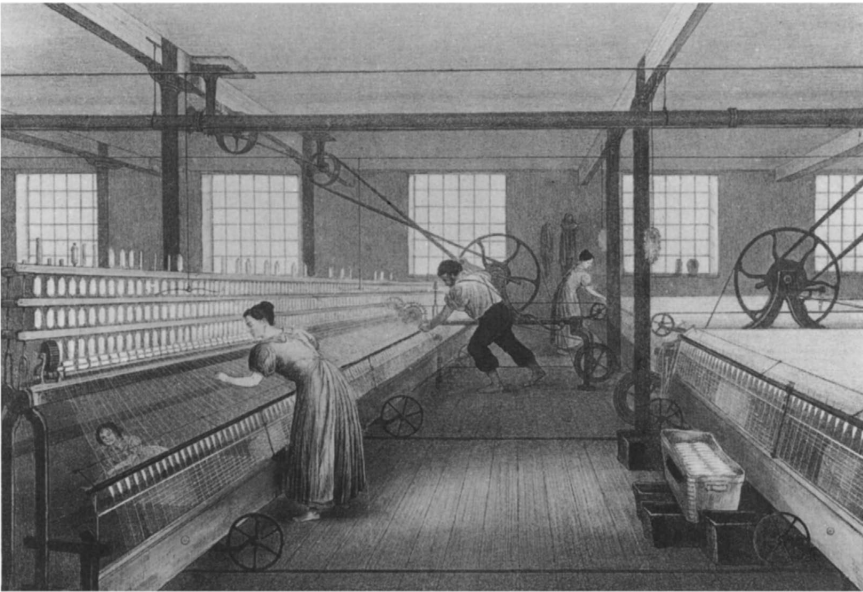
The collapse of the Federalist party and the disappearance of the old Puritan ideology were not the only important changes to come about in Boston during the early 1800s. The Federalists’ traditional sources of economic power and financial prosperity—shipping and commerce—were also drastically altered by America’s second war with Great Britain. During the course of the war, enemy blockading squadrons swept the seas clean of American shipping, so that by 1813 Boston Harbor was clogged with hundreds of empty vessels, swinging idly on their anchor chains with no place to go. Now that maritime activities were no longer profitable sources of investment, Yankee merchants were forced to look elsewhere for new enterprises in which to invest the capital they refused to give the government to fight the war.

The financial salvation of New England proved to be not in wooden hulls or captains’ cabins, but rather in hastily constructed textile factories. Yankees quickly diverted their idle capital into manufacturing, instead of into mercantile enterprises that no longer paid dividends. The long period of embargoes and sinkings had forced interior sections of the country to go so long without manufactured goods that they were crying out for commodities at any price. Yankee enterprise was only too happy to respond. If there was a demand, New England would furnish the supplies. This was especially true with regard to the production of cotton textiles with which New Englanders had been

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experimenting in recent years. In spite of some false starts and early setbacks, the cotton textile industry expanded rapidly during the war years, most of it backed by Boston money and sparked by Yankee ingenuity.

What started as a temporary wartime expedient turned into a permanent addition to the Bay State economy once the War of 1812 was over. The introduction of the power loom by Francis Cabot Lowell at his Waltham plant in 1810 provided the means for increasing the production of woven fabrics, as well as bringing together under one roof all the processes of spinning and weaving. In 1821, Francis Lowell, Nathan Appleton, and Patrick Tracy Jackson moved out from Waltham and established new plants about forty miles north of Boston, where powerful falls were located along the Merrimack River. Here they set up a distinctive type of company-town called Lowell, which included boardinghouses for the workers and elaborate supervision of the young women (the “Mill Girls”) who came from nearby farms to work in the factories.



The War of 1812 and the subsequent British naval blockade encouraged the growth of the textile industry when New England shipping went into serious decline. The early textile mills in Waltham and later in Lowell operated by water power and depended upon the labor of young women, known as the “Mill Girls,” who came from neighboring farms to work in the factories. *Courtesy of the Boston Public Library, Print Department.*

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The acceptance of manufacturing as a permanent feature of the American economy was accomplished not only because of the profits it generated, but also because of its significance to the national security. Letting our workshops “remain in Europe,” as Thomas Jefferson had argued for so long, sounded wonderful—as long as there was peace. Once the country found itself at war for a second time with a major European power like Great Britain, however, it was evident that the United States needed its own manufacturing system to provide the goods necessary to defend itself. The War of 1812 had been a frightening demonstration of how national security was directly related to an independent industrial system. Even Jefferson was forced to admit, somewhat grudgingly, that “manufactures are now necessary to our independence as well as to our comfort.”

The new factory system, which fast expanded from a small, localized enterprise in the early 1800s to a multimillion-dollar industry by the 1830s, also helped create a new aristocracy of wealth and power. Many of the old mercantile families of Boston had grown rich on the commercial profits of Europe and the Far East. They had built spacious mansions in Boston, provided their wives and daughters with the latest fashions from London and Paris, and for generations had sent their sons to sea at an early age to learn the family business. Now, the members of this “codfish aristocracy” began to merge with the new manufacturers of cotton cloth and fancy fabrics, many of whom had moved into Boston from other areas of New England. Nathan Appleton, for example, had originally come down from New Hampshire as a merchant before going into textiles. Two brothers, Amos and Abbott Lawrence, had moved in from Middlesex County to set up in the import-export business before engaging in manufacturing. Every day, new families were moving in from Salem, Newburyport, Worcester, and New Bedford to blend their social and economic fortunes with those of the Boston group in what Samuel Eliot Morison has described as a marriage between “the wharf and the waterfall.” The Lowells, already associated with such prominent merchant families as the Cabots, the Higginsons, and the Russells, now linked up with the Jacksons through the marriage of Francis C. Lowell to Hannah Jackson, sister of Patrick Tracy Jackson; John Amory’s son, Augustus, married Abbott Lawrence’s daughter, Katherine; and in 1842 Abbott’s nephew, Amos Adams Lawrence, married Sarah Elizabeth Appleton, the niece of Nathan Appleton.

Not only were the Lowells, the Lawrences, and the Appletons partners in industry and colleagues in business, but they further integrated their interests

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through the powerful agency of kinship and marriage. It is generally agreed that it was Oliver Wendell Holmes who first applied the term "Brahmins" to the members of this new Boston aristocracy. In his novel *Elsie Venner*, Holmes wrote of a young Bostonian: "He comes of the Brahmin caste of New England. This is the harmless, inoffensive, untitled aristocracy." Expanding upon the description even further, Holmes painted a fascinating portrait of the "Boston Brahmins" with their "houses by Bulfinch, their monopoly of Beacon Street, their ancestral portraits and Chinese porcelains, humanitarianism, Unitarian faith in the march of the mind, Yankee shrewdness, and New England exclusiveness." Like the priestly Brahmin class of the ancient Hindus, who performed the sacred rites and set the moral standards, the new leaders of Boston society emerged as the self-styled Brahmins of a modern caste system in which they were clearly and indisputably the superior force.

One practical result of this revival of Boston's fortunes, and especially this influx of new young blood into old Yankee veins, was a renewed sense of obligation on the part of older families to the welfare of "their" town, and a new determination to participate actively once again in local political affairs. Just because the rest of the nation had lost its bearings and lowered its standards was no reason that Boston could not be saved, if members of the "better class" took over their responsibilities and regained positions of social and political leadership in the community. Once they had survived the initial shock of Jeffersonianism, Unitarianism, and Industrialism, the old families discovered that things had not turned out quite as badly as they had anticipated. They found ways of acclimating themselves to the new realities of Boston life, without losing their traditional characteristics.

They saw that manufacturing, for example, did not necessarily spell the end of commerce and shipping—indeed, it could actually be seen as a definite asset. By diversifying their investments and buying into new textile companies, old mercantile families found that they could not only use their commercial outlets for marketing their own manufactured goods, but they could also use the profits from their industrial activities to tide over their commercial enterprises when times were slow. Indeed, as Robert Dalzell observed in *The Enterprising Elite*, many Boston merchants found that manufacturing offered a much more steady income than the uncertainties of trade, as well as more time and leisure to pursue a political career, to patronize the arts, or to engage in all sorts of philanthropic and humanitarian enterprises.

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Bostonians also found that the end of Congregationalism did not necessarily mean the end of moral principles or ethical standards. The new and more liberal theology of Unitarianism was soon accepted as a happy medium between the old hellfire-and-brimstone approach of Calvinism, and the more science-oriented views of deists who saw no need of organized religion at all. After a while, Unitarianism was regarded as the best of two worlds—a religion that accepted the lessons of scientific reason, while still acknowledging the traditions of Boston's Puritan religious heritage. Rather than continuing to fight against the new "Boston religion" any longer, the upper classes of the town decided to accept it as a comfortable and rational approach to the Christian message.

In much the same spirit, rather than continuing to engage in a life-and-death struggle against the "new politics" of Jeffersonian democracy and popular government, a younger generation of Federalists, such as Harrison Gray Otis and Josiah Quincy, decided to adopt a more realistic attitude and appeal to the mass electorate in the new democratic fashion. Although there is little doubt that they still believed in the leadership of "the wise, the well-born, and the good," they had come to accept universal suffrage as regrettable but inevitable. They concentrated their efforts, therefore, on convincing lower- and middle-class voters that the upper classes, with their high ideals, exalted virtues, and substantial incomes, could contribute far more to the social and economic well-being of the working people of the town than the Johnny-come-lately Jeffersonian Democrats, who were seeking only political power and financial profit.

In contrast to their elders, many of whom still refused to engage in the distasteful give-and-take of political campaigning (a proper Bostonian did not "run" for public office—he "offered himself" for the position), the younger breed of Federalists showed a keen appreciation for the importance of party politics, the power of the popular vote, and the influence of public opinion. Pitching their appeals to the Boston's working class, the young Federalists emphasized the responsibility of the "happy and respectable classes" to watch over those laws that affected "the less prosperous portions of the community." Their obvious desire for political control of Boston carried with it a sense of responsibility for the prosperity of the town and the welfare of its less fortunate classes—a sort of moral stewardship, a form of *noblesse oblige*—that would continue to be an integral part of Boston's political heritage. This arrangement not only would help the upper classes stay in power, but would condition the lower classes to emulate the moral, social, and political values

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of the Brahmins, and thus become an unconscious part of the tradition itself. Conservative leaders might not be able to control national politics and save the people in the rest of the country from “democratic” claptrap and egalitarian nonsense, but they could still fight to keep Boston a model of excellence—their cherished “City upon a Hill.”

As part of their new effort to position themselves at the head of local government, the young Federalists actively supported what had been for many years an on-and-off movement to change Boston from a town to a city. It had become increasingly obvious that with an expanding economic structure and a rising population, the old town-meeting system was no longer capable of dealing with the demands of what was clearly a growing urban center. Old buildings needed to be razed and new ones erected. The lighting and paving of streets required municipal attention, and a fresh-water supply was desperately called for, as was a more adequate system for cleaning the streets and disposing of garbage. Even more important, the recent growth in Boston’s population pointed up the serious lack of adequate police and fire protection for the general public.

During the early 1800s, Boston had a total of twenty-four constables who served as “Captains of the Watch,” supervising the activities of the town’s “watchmen.” All males over eighteen years of age were required to serve as watchmen to patrol the streets from ten o’clock at night until sunrise, to keep an eye out for fires and to see that good order was maintained. Under the direction of the constables, thirty-six watchmen worked each night in two shifts of eighteen men each, operating out of four watch stations in different parts of the town. While the system looked effective on paper, in actual practice it left much to be desired. Most of the watchmen were young men from the lower classes of the town who needed part-time jobs. Armed only with a rattle for summoning help and a long hook that was practically useless for collaring troublemakers, they did not go out of their way to look for danger on a job that paid only fifty cents a night. The responsibility of the watchmen was simply to report infractions of the law—not to look for trouble, detect crime, or seek out violent situations.

The conditions of fire prevention in the town were not much better. After a disastrous fire in 1711, Boston had been divided into several fire districts, administered by officers, called “Firewards,” who were given special badges and a five-foot-long red staff topped with a brass spire. These men headed up groups of several hundred young residents who enrolled in volunteer fire

companies, elected their own officers, designed their own uniforms, held an annual supper, and became a powerful political force in the town. In addition to performing their civic duty, many volunteers were also motivated by the cash prizes regularly awarded to the first company to appear at a fire, as well as by the opportunities for slipping into burning buildings and walking off with valuable loot. Not only were these colorful volunteer fire companies highly inefficient, they were also likely to turn the scene of a fire into an occasion for a bloody brawl with rival volunteer companies. Clearly, steps had to be taken to change these haphazard arrangements as soon as possible. The old town-meeting system, however, seemed incapable of addressing any of these urban challenges.

Despite bitter and highly emotional arguments against changing the hallowed name of the “Towne of Boston,” which had produced “our glorious revolution” and which had seen its narrow streets “died with blood,” the vote in favor of incorporation passed on January 7, 1822. On February 23, Governor John Brooks officially approved “an act establishing the City of Boston.” This act provided that the administration of all the “fiscal, prudential, and municipal concerns” of the city be vested in “one principal officer” called the Mayor, a committee of eight persons called the Board of Aldermen, and a council of forty-eight persons called the Common Council. A city seal, showing a view of the city from South Boston point, was adopted; as was a motto from the Book of Kings: “*Sit Deus nobiscum sicut fuit cum patribus nostris.*” Adapted for the city seal, the motto reads: “*Sicut Patribus Sit Deus Nobis.*”

Once the formalities were out of the way, the city turned to the task of electing its first mayor. At that point, the political influence of the “new” Federalists became immediately evident. One branch of the local Federalist leadership put up fifty-seven-year-old Harrison Gray Otis as its candidate, while the “Middling Classes” of the town favored the more popular fifty-year-old Josiah Quincy. When neither side could claim the required majority, the voters settled on John Phillips, a graduate of Harvard College and a member of an old Boston mercantile family. After Phillips completed his single year in office, Josiah Quincy secured the nomination and seized the reins of government with a vigor and determination that eventually won him the title of the “Great Mayor.” Born in Braintree into a distinguished family, Quincy graduated from Harvard in 1790 and served in Washington, D.C., as a Federalist congressman from 1805 to 1813. After the War of 1812, he returned to Boston, served in the Massachusetts senate from 1813 to 1820, and then moved to a single term in the lower house before taking a seat on the Boston municipal bench. Elected

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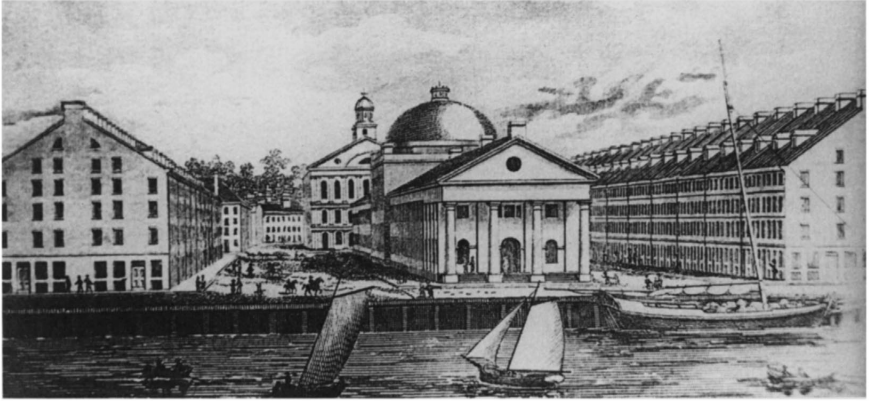
as mayor to six consecutive one-year terms, serving from 1823 to 1828, Quincy established a program of urban planning and city development that few mayors have been able to duplicate.

In Josiah Quincy's day, Boston was still an impressive city to look at—especially coming into the harbor by ship. The great wharves that stretched far out into the water were surmounted by large four-story brick storehouses. All were uniform in height, with streets on either side for unloading the commercial cargoes that came into the city from all parts of the world. The visitor's eyes would be immediately attracted to the lofty dome of the new State House high atop Beacon Hill, and then be drawn to the irregular cluster of church spires that rose above the pointed gables and jutting chimney tops. The cupola of Faneuil Hall, the outline of the Old State House, and the peaks of a dozen other public buildings, together with the graceful white steeples of the numerous churches scattered throughout the city, gave the low-lying seaport town an appearance of height and spaciousness.

Once ashore, however, closer inspection would reveal that the passage of time had taken its toll on this venerable town, now more than two centuries old. There were, to be sure, many charming reminders of the colonial past—along the tree-lined avenues of Pearl Street, High Street, and Summer Street, where handsome residences were landscaped with colorful bushes and lovely gardens. With the reclaiming of the land around the new State House, blocks of elegant mansions had gone up on the north side of Beacon Street, and along Tremont Street the attractive houses of Colonnade Row provided attractive quarters for the city's well-to-do merchants and businessmen.

Within the heart of the old city itself, however, things had deteriorated over the years. With a total population of nearly forty-three thousand—already twenty-five thousand more than in 1790—Boston's limited confines were showing the strains. Its meandering streets had always been notoriously crooked and narrow, but now they were hedged in by four- and five-story houses that blocked out the sunlight and obscured the view. Pedestrians were in constant danger of being knocked down by stagecoaches, or bowled over by droves of pigs being hustled to market. On "high market days," the congested Faneuil Hall market district was a compressed, discordant mass of people, with butchers cutting their meat along the first floor of the hall itself, vendors of fruits and vegetables lined up under wooden sheds along the outside walls, and fishmongers stationed behind long wooden benches with large tubs full of all kinds of seafood.

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One of the most notable achievements of Mayor Josiah Quincy was the construction of a new market district directly behind Faneuil Hall. A large granite market house, executed by Alexander Parris in the Greek Revival style, was flanked by four-story granite warehouses that stored incoming cargo from all parts of the world. *Courtesy of the Boston Public Library, Print Department.*

What was new about this market scene—an integral part of Boston’s life for generations—was the abominable stench that rose above it all. Not only were there the oily smells from the docks, the briny tang of salt water, and the sickening odor of the mudflats at low tide, but there was also the repulsive reek of uncollected street refuse and untended garbage. To make matters worse, the city’s sewage system emptied out into the Town Dock, which was located directly behind Faneuil Hall. This body of water became the stagnant receptacle for every sort of filth, rubbish, and waste. Indeed, a note in the log of one Boston constable for April 1805 complained: “The Mill Pond is a nuisance, full of putrid fish and dead dogs and cats.” But the stench of the city was not confined to the market district. All through the inner parts of the city, the obvious lack of any effective system for cleaning the streets had produced piles of rubbish, garbage, “house dirt,” and “street dirt” that went uncollected for long periods of time. Open privies, contaminated wells, and pools of rancid water created such a dreadful condition that many of the more prosperous residents had given up on any possibility of saving the old part of the city and were already moving into the West End or across Tremont Street into the Beacon Hill area.

Almost as soon as Josiah Quincy was sworn into office as Boston’s second mayor, he announced his determination to take action against this “generated pestilence.” Rich people, he observed in his inaugural address, could always

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move out of town during the hot summer months and seek refuge in “purer atmospheres.” Poor people, on the other hand, were forced to remain in the city and inhale the “noxious effluvia.” In a dramatic demonstration of how an upper-class Federalist mayor could work for the welfare of the “less prosperous” classes of the city, Quincy set to work rescuing the oldest part of the city from decay and ruin. Refusing to be handcuffed by the obstructionist tactics of old town board members who objected to the new mayor stepping on their administrative toes, Josiah Quincy took whatever municipal powers he needed to accomplish his purposes. By appointing himself chairman *ex officio* of all executive committees, he assumed a controlling voice in all municipal activities and decisions. By appointing professional administrators who reported to him personally, he established a system of direct accountability. Less than two weeks after taking office, for example, he appointed Benjamin Pollard, a Harvard graduate and a practicing lawyer, as city marshal. In addition to his duties as chief police officer, Pollard was also authorized by Mayor Quincy to act as the city’s chief health officer.

Always, however, Josiah Quincy made it evident that he was in charge of things. He customarily conducted tours of inspection on horseback at five o’clock in the morning, and on one occasion, during the summer of 1825, he led a posse of burly truckmen into one of the city’s scandalous red-light districts to break up disturbances that had been going on for a week. In a remarkably short time, the new mayor was having the streets cleaned by teams of sweepers, had the refuse collected on a regular basis, and brought the sewers under public control. By the end of his first year in office, he could boast of having collected six thousand tons of street dirt (he had it weighed!), making Boston reputedly one of the healthiest and safest cities in the United States.

A definite spirit of civic reform was in the air in Boston during the mid-1830s, directed by members of the “happy and respectable classes” who obviously saw themselves as high-minded and responsible stewards of the city. Members of old Boston families, like Josiah Quincy, were intent on using their powers of political leadership to refashion and renew the urban community in which they lived—not only for themselves, but also for all the people of the community. This reform impulse, however, was destined to go far beyond physical concerns and material benefits of the city, gradually influencing the moral and intellectual standards by which the ordinary people of Boston lived and the heights to which they might eventually aspire.

5

The Reform Impulse

IT IS easy to ascribe the extensive physical changes and material improvements that took place in the city of Boston during the late 1820s to the extraordinary energies of a single individual like Josiah Quincy. In many ways, however, this desire for reform, this striving for perfection, was symptomatic of a much broader social commitment on the part of the city's Brahmin aristocracy. There had always been, of course, the regular philanthropic support for good and noble causes—generous contributions to Harvard College, to the Massachusetts Historical Society, to Massachusetts General Hospital, to the Boston Athenaeum, to the building of the Bunker Hill monument, to the restoration of George Washington's home at Mount Vernon. For the most part, however, these acts of generosity were directed toward projects with which the prosperous classes themselves were concerned.

What was striking about events in the late 1820s and early 1830s, however, was that conservative Bostonians extended their reform activities to include humanitarian concerns that affected the less fortunate members of the community. Assistance for the poor and homeless of the city, for example, was one area of concern that attracted the attention of Mayor Quincy and his associates. They were concerned about what they regarded as the ineffective

methods used by old “Overseers of the Poor” and now wanted to handle the problem at the municipal level in a much more equitable and efficient manner. If the inspiration for the reform impulse in Boston came out of the Protestant ideal of perfectionism, its newer approaches reflected the rational spirit of the Enlightenment era. City authorities were content to extend municipal charity to those they termed the “impotent poor”—infants, the elderly, the sick, and the disabled. They strenuously objected, however, to the “able poor”—persons who were apparently able-bodied and capable of doing manual labor—getting free handouts without doing any work. When Mayor Quincy sold off the old Almshouse in March 1825, therefore, he replaced it with a new building he called, appropriately enough, the House of Industry. At this location, all able-bodied recipients of public relief would be required to work for their keep. In this way, Quincy boasted, he could separate the “respectable and honest poor” from the “idle and vicious” elements of the community.

In seeking other ways to improve the city, community leaders were also concerned about the increase in intemperate drinking, especially its influence on the growth of crime and pauperism among the poorer classes. After 1824, with the election of Dr. John Collins Warren as president, the Massachusetts Society for the Suppression of Intemperance became much more active. Its members worked with Mayor Quincy and the aldermen to prohibit the sale of alcoholic beverages in all theaters and public places. Dr. Warren also persuaded the Massachusetts Medical Society to adopt resolutions urging all doctors to refrain from prescribing alcoholic medications whenever possible. When the powerful sermons of the Reverend Lyman Beecher helped awaken public conscience to the moral implications of intemperate drinking, the movement became more militant and turned to total abstinence in an effort to conquer the immoral temptations of the “Demon Rum.” In 1833, various elements of the crusade for “teetotalism” came together in what became known as the Massachusetts Temperance Society.

Prison reform was still another humanitarian effort that drew heavy support from the upper classes of the city. Mayor Quincy was appalled when he saw nearly four hundred persons crammed into the thirty-two-room county jail at Leverett Street, and he agitated strongly for immediate change. Members of the Boston Prison Discipline Society, formed in 1825 by the Reverend Louis Dwight, took the lead in denouncing the deplorable conditions they found in the old state prison in Charlestown. Largely as a result of the efforts of these upper-class men and women, in 1826 the state legislature authorized the construction

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of a new prison along the more humane lines of New York's Auburn system. Individual cells now separated hardened criminals from first offenders, and provisions were made for inmates to learn new occupations and to engage in recreational activities.

In exploring other ways by which criminals could be rehabilitated, officials agreed that henceforth the treatment of juvenile offenders would take place at a different location. While fully convinced that society had the obligation to punish young people for criminal offenses, Josiah Quincy also felt that society had no right to confine young people to a "moral pest house, out of which nothing good can ever issue." In 1828, therefore, following the strong urging of the mayor, a new House of Reformation was constructed on the nearby South Boston peninsula. Here, at what later would be called the Reform School, juvenile offenders were not only separated from older and more hardened criminals, but they were also provided with work training for their eventual rehabilitation.

Even the question of slavery caused many Brahmins to have bouts of conscience during the 1820s and 1830s. A number of prominent Bostonians became active in the work of the American Colonization Society, which proposed purchasing slaves to free and resettle them in Africa. Many businessmen regarded the colonization plan as a sensible and highly rational solution that would eventually remove all blacks and bring an eventual end to slavery.*

In these and in many other philanthropic and humanitarian enterprises, the Brahmins displayed a consistent belief that it was their moral obligation to use their time, talents, and money for the benefits of all the citizens of the city, poor as well as rich. Although wedded to tradition, Brahmins were by no means opposed to progress. And if progress could come about in a gradual manner, directed by the "better classes," without any serious threat to the existing order, then surely Boston could continue to be a model of excellence. Already they felt that their civic achievements—a more effective police department, a better fire department, urban renewal, cleaner streets, aid for the poor, temperance programs, more humane prisons—guaranteed a healthy, law-abiding city; a gradual improvement in the lot of the "less fortunate" classes; and an upgrading of the whole moral tone of the community.

There were other Bostonians, however, who felt that there had to be an even more ambitious effort to raise the overall cultural and intellectual tone of

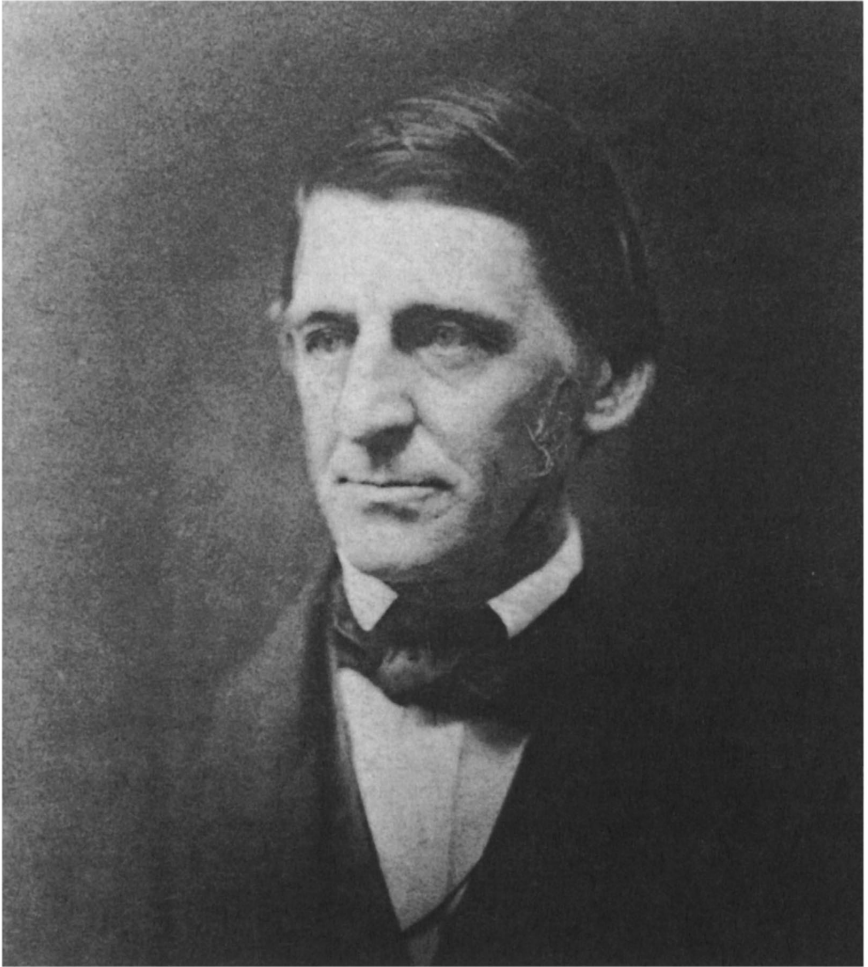
* Many white people believed that colonization would also help Christianize the "dark continent" by sending back to Africa former slaves who had been exposed to Christianity in America.

the city, an effort that would go beyond modernizing its politics and cleaning its streets. If the town of Boston had now become a city, then it must be a great city—not only in the stability of its political institutions and the prosperity of its commercial activities, but also in the brilliance of its intellects and the creativity of its artists. Nothing would do but for Boston to become not merely the “Athens” of America but, indeed, as Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes would have it, the “Hub” of the entire universe.

The dream of universal renown for Boston in the world of letters suddenly became a reality as the region experienced one of the most creative periods in all of American literature. Out of Puritan New England’s “stern and rockbound” environment came a number of artists who turned the rugged terrain into a veritable garden of delights. During what Van Wyck Brooks has aptly called “The Flowering of New England,” those who had complained that Americans had contributed little to the world of letters now had more literary works than they had ever imagined. Boston writers soon won international distinction with a flood of works epitomizing the optimistic and progressive spirit of the day. It is significant that most literary works of the period had certain features in common: they emphasized the theme of “America,” accentuated the democratic spirit, and placed great store in the innate goodness of all people and their natural ability to rise to great heights. In almost every respect, America’s famous literary renaissance echoed precisely the same ideals that were found in the political rhetoric of Jacksonian democracy during the very same period.

The best-known spokesman for the new intellectual movement was Ralph Waldo Emerson, who had left the Unitarian ministry to gain considerably more fame as a writer, lecturer, and philosopher. Making his home in the town of Concord, Massachusetts, Emerson gathered about him a small band of devoted disciples, many of whom would become famous authors in their own right. In his famous Phi Beta Kappa address delivered at Harvard College in 1837, Emerson issued a ringing declaration of American intellectual independence by calling on American scholars to stop imitating “the courtly muses of Europe.” He urged young writers to forget about dusty archives and ancient sources, and derive their inspiration from the creativity of their own minds and the scenes of natural beauty right around them. Emerson had already suggested, in an essay entitled “Nature,” that people must learn the lessons of the universe firsthand if they were ever to understand the complete workings of the world of eternal truth. In a series of essays, he emphasized the virtues of individualism,

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Ralph Waldo Emerson left the Unitarian ministry to pursue a career as an essayist and philosopher, becoming a highly regarded public figure. Emphasizing individualism and self-reliance, and expounding upon the inspirational beauties of nature, Emerson became the focal center of a group of creative men and women who became known as the Transcendentalists. *Courtesy of the Bostonian Society/Old State House.*

self-reliance, and self-improvement, accentuating the optimism of the age and the unlimited opportunities available to the American people.

One of Emerson's close friends was Henry David Thoreau—poet, writer, and incurable nonconformist. For two years, Thoreau lived in a small shack beside Walden Pond near Concord, without any of the then-modern

conveniences. He provided a memorable record of those two years in his book *Walden* (1854), in which he not only described the beauties of nature during the changing seasons of the year, but also philosophized about the importance of the individual and the desperate need for simplifying the innumerable details that complicate life. A rugged individualist himself, Thoreau spent a night in jail for refusing to pay his taxes to support the Mexican War, and then justified his position with his “Civil Disobedience” (1849), an essay on passive resistance and civil disobedience that was destined to have lasting influence throughout the world.*

Almost every conceivable phase of the American experience was explored by a host of writers who were friends and acquaintances of Emerson. Nathaniel Hawthorne reached back into the early New England past to write with biting criticism about the old Puritans in his *Scarlet Letter* (1850) and *House of the Seven Gables* (1851). Certainly one of the most popular poets of the day was Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, whose “Voices in the Night” (1838) ranked him as one of the great American poets. His best-known works came later, however, as he delved into the American past and produced such memorable works as “Evangeline” (1847), “The Song of Hiawatha” (1855), and “The Courtship of Myles Standish” (1858). His “Midnight Ride of Paul Revere” (1860) became an instant popular classic and a permanent part of American folklore. The gentle Quaker poet John Greenleaf Whittier first gained attention with his *Voices of Freedom* (1848), a volume of antislavery verse. Later, however, he won a much wider audience with such nostalgic poems as “The Barefoot Boy” (1856) and “Snow-Bound” (1866), tenderly reminiscent of his New England boyhood. During the same period, Oliver Wendell Holmes—essayist, poet, and novelist, as well as an eminent medical authority—achieved wide literary fame with his witty and urbane series of essays entitled “The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table” in the *Atlantic Monthly* (1857).

At the same time that scores of Boston writers were producing brilliant works of creative literature, other scholars were searching the American past to uncover the tangled roots of the democratic experience. Starting in 1834, George Bancroft (who also found time to serve as a Cabinet member and a foreign minister) began producing his ten-volume *History of the United States*. Heavily nationalistic and profoundly democratic, Bancroft’s history was

* Thoreau’s essay “Civil Disobedience” was the inspiration for Mahatma Gandhi’s struggle against British colonialism in India, and for the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.’s, struggle for civil rights in the United States.

extremely popular with the American public. His patriotic history books were the kind that American families were only too happy to purchase for edification of their children.

Jared Sparks, a Unitarian minister and Harvard professor, was another prodigious worker who, in addition to editing the *North American Review*, managed to publish the twelve-volume *Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution* (1829–30) and equally long sets entitled *The Writings of George Washington* (1834–37) and *The Works of Benjamin Franklin* (1836–40). William Hickling Prescott interested himself in the history of Spain, especially where it concerned the origins of American history. In 1838 he published his *Ferdinand and Isabella*, followed by colorful studies entitled *The Conquest of Mexico* (1843) and *The Conquest of Peru* (1847). A friend of Prescott, John Lothrop Motley, felt that the saga of freedom in Holland offered an interesting prelude to the struggle for American independence and won fame with his *The Rise of the Dutch Republic* (1856). Superior to both Prescott and Motley, though most of his works would not appear until just after the Civil War, was Francis Parkman. Overcoming the disabilities of terrible health and virtual blindness, Parkman produced a series of historical works dealing with French exploration in North America over the course of a century and a half. With *Pioneers of France in the New World* (1865), *The Jesuits in North America* (1867), *The Conspiracy of Pontiac* (1851), and many other works, Parkman established a model of scholarly history and excellent literature.

The creative imagination that produced this remarkable American literary renaissance was further intensified by a new philosophical movement called Transcendentalism. Although the term was borrowed from the German philosophy of Immanuel Kant, which insisted that objective reality existed only in the mind, the American version corresponded only vaguely to its original German meaning. Some of the most active adherents of the new philosophy were Ralph Waldo Emerson and his literary friends, who met regularly in Concord at the Transcendental Club, and from 1840 to 1844 published a journal called *The Dial* to immortalize their ideas. At one time or another, membership in this group included Thoreau, William Ellery Channing, Theodore Parker, Bronson Alcott, and Margaret Fuller. During their sessions of the Transcendental Club, they discussed a philosophy that held that the innate qualities of individuals transcended their actual experiences, and that the soul had the inherent power to grasp the truth. By relying on instinct and intuition, rather than reason and science, they held that man and society could be renovated.

THE REFORM IMPULSE

Many of these celebrated lecturers and writers made their homes in Boston or resided there for a time. The British traveler Alexander MacKay observed that if one met a gentleman in the vicinity of Washington Street “with a decent coat and a clean shirt,” chances were that he was “either a lecturer, a Unitarian minister, or a poet; possibly the man might be all three at once.” Beacon Hill was a favorite location where many of the literati made their homes. George Ticknor, professor of Romance languages at Harvard College, moved into the old Amory House on the corner of Park and Beacon Streets; William Prescott worked on his histories at 55 Beacon Street overlooking Boston Common. The Parkman House stood just a little down from the new State House on Beacon Hill; Longfellow lived for a while on Cedar Street; William Dean Howells at Louisburg Square; Thomas Bailey Aldrich on Mount Vernon Street; and Oliver Wendell Holmes first on Bosworth Street, then on Charles Street. Julia Ward Howe and her husband, Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, lived for a while on Chestnut Street; Louisa May Alcott lived first on Pinckney Street and then moved to Louisburg Square.

It was customary for many of these writers to walk to the Old Corner Book Store, on the corner of Washington and School Streets. They would browse through the books on sale on the ground floor of the old building managed by William Ticknor, and then wander over to the “curtained corner” to discuss their works in progress. Later in the afternoon, they would often dine at the home of Ticknor’s partner, James T. Fields, continue their conversations, and occasionally meet visiting British authors like Charles Dickens.

Another favorite gathering place for the Boston literati during this same period was the nearby Boston Athenaeum. Over the years, prominent Boston citizens had built up substantial private collections of books. The Athenaeum was established in 1808 in order to bring these private collections together under one roof and to provide an institution—“a place of social intercourse”—where members could read and study in quiet and comfortable surroundings. At first the Athenaeum was located in the Perkins estate on Pearl Street, but it was later moved to an impressive sandstone Italian Renaissance-style building at 10½ Beacon Street. It continued to be financed by its private members and was open only to them and to qualified scholars.

Not content associating only with their own limited circle of friends, the Boston writers looked for outlets through which to make their views known to a wider audience. In 1815, members of the Monthly Anthology Club began what would eventually become a famous Boston magazine called the *North American Review*. Its articles, essays, and works of poetry cut across a whole

range of the thinking going on in Boston literary circles during the 1830s and 1840s. Noted Harvard professors like Jared Sparks, Edward Everett, Charles Eliot Norton, James Russell Lowell, and Henry Adams charted the direction of this influential publication for many years to come. Although the Transcendental publication *The Dial*, under the direction of Margaret Fuller, appeared only from 1840 to 1844, it provided still another opportunity for Boston writers to express their literary ideas and philosophical views. In 1857, the *Atlantic Monthly* made its appearance, breaking new ground in American literary expression with Holmes's "Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table" and Lowell's "Biglow Papers."

The printed page alone could not confine the vigorous energies of the Boston writers, however. They missed few opportunities to take to the lecture platform, not only to expound upon their special fields of knowledge, but also to air their personal opinions on the public issues of the day. At a time when Josiah Holbrook's Lyceum lecturing system was becoming popular in other parts of the country, the Boston writers were using a number of local organizations to establish lecture programs all over the city. Edward Everett, Daniel Webster, and Nathan Hale created the Useful Knowledge Society, and within a short time other groups followed. The Boston Lyceum, the Mercantile Library Association, and the Mechanics Association were among the best-known groups that emphasized the importance of self-education and made the "lecture habit" a prominent feature of Boston society. In 1836 John Lowell, Jr., founded the Lowell Institute, which offered free lectures on science, religion, history, and literature. The Lowell lectures proved to be extremely popular in their day, with as many as eight to ten thousand people applying for tickets to a particular series of lectures by some prominent scholar such as Benjamin Silliman discussing chemistry, James Russell Lowell examining poetry, or Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, or Oliver Wendell Holmes speaking on a variety of topics.

Raised from childhood in the belief of "the infinite capacity of human nature," the leaders of Boston's cultural revival were not satisfied with merely raising the intellectual standards of their own small circle of upper-class and highly educated friends. They were also determined to open new horizons for every citizen of Boston, regardless of class or station. Not only did George Ticknor build up the greatest personal library in Boston, but he also threw himself into the ambitious task of creating a circulating library that would be free and open to all citizens of the city. Working with Edward Everett, he persuaded city authorities to build a public library that would serve the

less-favored classes of the community. Founded in 1848 as the first large municipal public library in America, the Boston Public Library originally shared rooms with the Massachusetts Historical Society above the archway in Bulfinch's Tontine Crescent in Franklin Square. Later, in 1895, it would move to its present location in Copley Square, to occupy a new Renaissance-style building designed by McKim, Mead, and White.

Those who set the standards for excellence in the city, like George Ticknor and his fellow Brahmins, were seriously concerned that even those people who occupied the lowest rungs of Boston's socioeconomic ladder should have more "useful knowledge" in order to raise themselves up and improve the quality of their lives. On a visit to Boston, British author Matthew Arnold observed a barefoot newsboy reading quietly in the public library. "I do not think I have been so impressed with anything else I have seen since arriving in the country," he wrote. The writer Van Wyck Brooks later observed, "Boston, all New England, respected learning. No New England boy was allowed to question that he was destined to succeed in life, provided he knew enough; and Boston was determined that the boys and girls, and the blind and the insane as well, should have the opportunity to know enough."

Making sure that everybody in Boston "knew enough" meant doing something about the educational system of the day. During the early years of the Republic, there were some excellent private schools available for those young people whose parents could afford the tuition; colleges were reserved for those who had the proper academic preparation, social background, and financial income. As early as 1647 the General Court had ordered all townships with more than a hundred families to establish grammar schools. The results, however, had been usually uneven and mostly unsatisfactory. The very few "free schools" that did manage to exist—usually single-room, little red schoolhouses with ungraded classes—stayed open only a few months out of the year. They offered little more than the fundamental three R's, a pot-bellied stove, and a cranky schoolteacher who usually worked on a part-time basis.

With more Americans voting and taking part in the political process during the Jacksonian years of the 1830s and 1840s, however, it seemed absolutely necessary to extend educational benefits to as many people as possible. The haphazard and completely unprofessional educational system that existed seemed not only undemocratic, but actually dangerous to the interests of a republic whose future was based on the voting power of an informed electorate. The only answer, obviously, was a system of free, public education.

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One of the outstanding leaders in the fight to change the educational system of the day was Horace Mann, the son of a poor farmer, who gave up a promising political career to work at educational reform. Appointed secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education in 1837, he set out to establish an efficient and reputable school system. He demanded better schools, a uniform curriculum, more modern equipment, and the establishment of "Normal Schools" for the professional training of teachers.

The struggle to establish public education was not won without overcoming stubborn opposition, however. Taxpayers complained about the high costs of free education; childless property-owners objected to paying taxes to educate "other folks' " children. Wealthy parents preferred a more exclusive educational system; private schools condemned the introduction of unfair government competition. Influential church-related institutions protested against the "godless atheism" of people like Horace Mann, who retained the general moral principles of Protestantism in the form of Bible-reading, prayers, and hymns, but who also insisted that individual sectarianism (Congregationalism, Unitarianism, Presbyterianism, etc.) be kept out of public education.

Slowly, however, the advocates of free public education won out, supported by the views of a growing popular electorate. Urban workers and rural farmers now demanded a proper education for their children, and labor organizations soon found that compulsory education was an effective means of keeping children out of the labor market. Newly arrived immigrants welcomed the opportunity to provide their children with an education they themselves could never hope to obtain. And politically conscious Americans from all walks of life saw the value of an educational system that would provide the nation with literate voters. Gradually the tide began to turn. By 1860 the principle of free, public, tax-supported education was generally accepted throughout the northern sections of the country, although the implementation of this principle would take some time.

But this was not enough. There were children in Boston who were blind, who could not be accommodated in regular schools, and yet who also deserved their chance to "know enough." And so, with characteristic thoroughness, the leaders of Boston undertook a task that still challenged both medical science and professional education. Education of blind people was something new in the United States when a number of schools for the blind were established during the early 1830s in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston. By far the best known of these schools was the one established in Boston by Dr. Samuel Gridley



Julia Ward Howe worked with her husband, Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, developing programs for the benefit of young persons who were blind and disabled. During the Civil War, Julia became a national figure as the author of “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” and was in the forefront of the struggle for women’s rights during the rest of the nineteenth century. *Courtesy of the Bostonian Society/Old State House.*

Howe, husband of Julia Ward Howe and a close friend of Horace Mann. Howe established his Perkins Institution for the Blind with the financial assistance of Colonel Thomas Handasyd Perkins, a prominent Boston merchant. Perkins was persuaded to donate his huge estate on Pearl Street after the Boston community

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put on a vigorous fund-raising campaign that matched his gift of \$50,000. Moving into the rural peninsula of South Boston in 1839, the Perkins Institution soon became world famous as a result of Howe's experiments with musical instruments, raised alphabets, and other novel techniques for educating blind persons. European visitors constantly marveled at the progress Howe made with Laura Bridgman, a child born without hearing or sight. Inspired by the work of Howe, similar schools were soon established in many other parts of the United States.

If Bostonians were concerned about the plight of poor children who were unable to get a proper education, or blind children who could get only a limited education, their hearts were moved by the conditions of mentally handicapped children who could get no assistance at all. These were times when persons who were mentally retarded, feeble-minded, or mentally ill suffered from shameful neglect and callous brutality. Usually such persons were left either to roam around by themselves and become the butt of cruel jokes, or else were locked away and left to be forgotten.

Early reforms in handling the mentally handicapped were begun by the Quakers of Philadelphia, but by far the most dramatic advances came in the late 1840s through the heroic efforts of Dorothea Lynde Dix. A frail woman who ran a school for girls in Boston, Miss Dix went to teach Sunday school at the Cambridge House of Correction in 1841 and was appalled by the conditions of the "insane" inmates she found there who had committed no crimes. Shocked beyond words, she traveled the length and breadth of Massachusetts, visiting as many local jails and asylums as possible, taking detailed notes and carefully documenting the terrible conditions she found. In 1843, Miss Dix presented to the General Court of Massachusetts a "Memorial" in which she summarized the most repulsive brutalities inflicted on the insane men and women of the commonwealth, and demanded immediate action be taken to improve such conditions. Despite the attacks of those who dismissed her as nothing more than a sentimental female, Dorothea Dix was supported by reformers like Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe and Horace Mann. Eventually the state legislature appropriated funds to build a large addition to the Worcester hospital for the insane, thereby sparking campaigns in other northern states for state-supported hospitals for the treatment of the insane.

To a number of younger Bostonians, however, all these social projects and humanitarian efforts, though well-intentioned, did not get to the heart of what they regarded as some of the more pressing issues of the day. These



Dorothea Lynde Dix was one of a large number of women in the mid-nineteenth century who became active in social and humanitarian reforms. A vigorous and articulate advocate who demanded special facilities for people with mental illnesses, Dorothea Dix succeeded in setting up several hospitals and asylums for their care and treatment. *Courtesy of the Bostonian Society/Old State House.*

young people were convinced that there were more significant injustices in society that required immediate attention. Promoting temperance, improving prisons, upgrading education, and assisting the handicapped certainly provided

immediate help to individual persons, but they did not go far enough. Such efforts lent a helping hand to a few hapless victims of an oppressive society but made no attempt to force basic changes in the social system itself. They assisted paupers but did nothing about poverty. They improved prison conditions but did nothing about an environment that fostered crime. And, they would send a few slaves back to Africa but did not denounce the institution of slavery.

In many eastern cities, and most prominently in Boston, a number of people began to engage in activities designed to bring about substantial changes in the existing social structure—if not to overturn it completely. The spirit of radical reform was in the air. Young men started growing beards; took up the wearing of robes and sandals; ate fruits, nuts, berries, and other natural foods; gathered in rustic communes; and came up with utopian plans for a brave new world. “We are all a little wild here with numberless projects of social reform,” Ralph Waldo Emerson told the English historian Thomas Carlyle in the fall of 1840. “Not a reading man but has a draft of a new Community in his waistcoat pocket.” All this was disturbing to members of the conservative establishment, and occasionally frightening, when groups of these young radicals gathered together, as they did in November 1840 to attend a convention on “universal reform” at Boston’s Chardon Street Church. Addressing themselves to such controversial issues as perfectionism, pacifism, communitarianism, socialism, birth control, civil disobedience, and the repeal of the Sabbath Laws, they formed what Edmund Quincy called “the most singular collection of strange specimens of humanity that was ever assembled.” Emerson was even less charitable in his description of the radicals who rushed to the podium to sound off for their particular causes: “Mad-men and mad-women, men with beards, Dunkers, Muggletonians, Come-outers, Groaners, Agrarians, Seventh-Day Baptists, Quakers, Abolitionists, Calvinists, Unitarians, and Philosophers, all came successively to the top and seized the moment, if not the hour, wherein to chide, or pray, or preach, or protest.”

Alternately regarded as well-meaning zealots, demented crackpots, or dangerous extremists, the emotional young radicals were clearly viewed as a disruptive influence in a conservative community that believed that true reform could be achieved only through calm, gradual, and rational procedures. To make matters worse, the young Boston reformers were often led by ministers who had traded their quiet Unitarian pulpits for soap boxes and noisy lecture halls. Indeed, as historian Henry Commager has pointed out, these were the only major reform movements in American history—at least until the civil

rights movement of the 1960s—in which the clergy not only provided spiritual inspiration, but also took a physical part in the activities themselves.

The attainment of universal peace and the rejection of war as an instrument of national policy were idealistic goals to which a number of the young Boston reformers turned their attention. In 1845, a thirty-four-year-old Harvard graduate and a promising young lawyer named Charles Sumner gave the annual Fourth of July address at Faneuil Hall before a distinguished gathering of political officials and military representatives. Having announced the title of his oration as “The True Grandeur of Nations,” Sumner surprised and stunned his unsuspecting audience by elaborating on the evils of war, the wastefulness of national defense, and the uselessness of the U.S. military academy as nothing more than a “seminary of idleness and vice.” Decorated generals and admirals walked out of the hall in complete disgust, while old Boston families whose ancestors had fought at Lexington and Bunker Hill were shocked beyond words by such treasonous views. Mayor Samuel Eliot summed up the opinion of Beacon Hill quite accurately when he sputtered: “That young man has cut his own throat!”

Similar outrage from the conservative Brahmin establishment greeted the sudden and public emergence of females as outspoken crusaders for the cause of women’s rights. According to traditional English legal customs that still operated in the United States, women had few, if any, legal, political, or civil rights. When they married, they became the wards of their husbands, who assumed title over their property and their earnings. Women could neither vote nor hold public office, nor were they allowed to speak before “mixed audiences,” deliver sermons, attend college, or enter any of the professions. They received an elementary education in the three R’s, which enabled them to handle the simple accounts of the kitchen, the markets, and other parts of their carefully restricted “sphere of influence.” Beyond that, advanced studies were considered much too dangerous for the delicate female mind.

In the age of the “Common Man,” however, when the ideals of equality were so frequently emphasized, it seemed nothing short of heresy that women should be ranked as second-class members of American society, especially at a time when illiterate foreign immigrants were allowed to become naturalized citizens. There were many females, and some sympathetic males, who were highly indignant over the outright discrimination that prevented women from having the same legal, political, and educational opportunities as men. Buoyed by the spirit of universal democracy that permeated the age, women began to agitate for equal rights at all levels of American society.

No longer displaying the meekness and submissiveness expected of them by the male-dominated society of the day, women demanded the right to vote, the right to work, the right to hold money and property in their own names, and the right to a higher education. And they demonstrated their ability to achieve great things, even in what was still considered a man's world. Margaret Fuller, for example, a close friend of Emerson and other intellectuals, worked at an incredible pace. Teacher, translator, and public lecturer, she was the editor of the Transcendental journal *The Dial*, as well as the author of a controversial best-selling book called *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845). Lydia Maria Child, another leading Boston feminist, served for many years as executive secretary of the American Anti-Slavery Society, and in 1841 assumed the editorship of *The National Anti-Slavery Standard*. Women like Elizabeth Cady Stanton of New York, Sarah and Angelina Grimké of Philadelphia, and Lucretia Mott of Philadelphia joined their Boston associates in taking to the lecture circuit and pouring out their feelings in books and magazines. Lucy Stone, a graduate of Oberlin College who later settled in Dorchester, had her husband sign a protest in which he renounced all the laws that had given him injurious and unnatural superiority over his wife. Not only did she keep her maiden name as a symbol of her legal equality, but she founded Lucy Stone Leagues to encourage other women to follow her emancipated example.

The sight of females working, writing, lecturing, and engaging in all sorts of "vulgar" enterprises far beyond the familiar confines of hearth and home evoked hostile reaction from the conservative Boston community. Some residents were openly scornful of the attempts by "liberated women" to tamper with the established norms of society and undermine the fundamental teachings of Christianity. Others poked fun at those women who had pretensions to professional careers or literary futures as nothing more than frustrated "bluestockings." But perhaps the most poignant insult came from those very men who were supposed to be dedicating themselves to the eradication of discrimination. In 1840, several American women traveled to London to attend a meeting of the World Anti-Slavery Congress, only to find themselves excluded from the proceedings simply because they were women. Infuriated at being treated as inferiors, they returned to America and in 1848 held the first Women's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls, New York. Here they issued a ringing paraphrase of the Declaration of Independence, announcing that "all men and women" were created equal, and demanding that women be given "immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of the United States."



William Lloyd Garrison, operating out of a small, hole-in-the-wall office on Washington Street, published *The Liberator* on January 1, 1831, as the organ of the abolition movement in Boston. He was responsible for transforming a gradualist humanitarian reform movement into a powerful immediatist moral crusade. Regarding slavery as a moral evil, Garrison demanded the total and immediate abolition of slavery without compensation to slave owners. *Courtesy of the Bostonian Society/Old State House.*

But if the movement for women's rights caused the Brahmin establishment to raise an eyebrow in astonishment, it was the new antislavery movement begun by William Lloyd Garrison in January 1831 that caused the Brahmin establishment to shake its fist in anger. Harrison Gray Otis was halfway through his third term as mayor of Boston—having succeeded Josiah Quincy in 1829—

when he began receiving explosive letters from the governors of Virginia and Georgia demanding that he take action against some “incendiary” newspaper called *The Liberator*, published in his city, that was inciting the slaves of the South to riot and revolt. Nat Turner’s abortive slave uprising in August 1831 struck terror in the hearts of Southerners everywhere, and many slaveholders blamed the Yankee publication for having caused it. Senator Robert Y. Hayne of South Carolina demanded legal action against the editor, and the *National Intelligencer* publicly inquired of “the worthy mayor of the city of Boston” whether there were any laws that could prevent the publication of such “diabolical papers.”

Mayor Otis was at a complete loss. Although *The Liberator* had been circulating for almost a year, neither he nor any of his conservative friends and acquaintances had heard of it. He ordered an investigation of the offending publication, and in due time he was informed that the paper was indeed called *The Liberator* and was being published by a man named Garrison. His office was described as nothing but an “obscure hole” on Washington Street, and his staff was reported as consisting only of a few “insignificant persons of all colors.”

Mayor Otis breathed a sigh of relief—only a tempest in a teapot. He wrote to his friends in the South and assured them that this unfortunate incident was of no serious concern. This new “fanaticism,” he wrote, had no influence at all among persons of consequence in the Bay State. Nor was it likely, he emphasized, “to make proselytes among the respectable classes of our people.” Some years later, a bewildered Harrison Gray Otis sighed, “In this I was mistaken.”

Just *how* mistaken he had been even Mayor Otis himself would never know. This “obscure” little newspaper and its “fanatical” editor were destined to revolutionize completely the antislavery movement in the United States, tear apart the great “conspiracy of silence,” and accelerate the sectional confrontation leading to the great crisis of the Union.

6

Liberty and Union

THERE had been concern about the issue of slavery long before America had ever heard of William Lloyd Garrison. During the early 1800s, discussions about slavery had generally been rational, the demands moderate, and the approach gentlemanly. One of the most popular of all early emancipation programs was the American Colonization Society, which proposed to purchase the freedom of so many slaves a year and “colonize” them back to Africa. Boasting a membership that included such prominent Southerners as Judge Bushrod Washington, President James Monroe, and Senator Henry Clay, the experiment also attracted a great deal of interest in the North. Conservative Boston businessmen like Amos Lawrence saw the movement as a way by which to rid the United States of slavery in a gradual, reasonable, and nonthreatening manner.

There were other Americans, however, who regarded the institution of slavery with the utmost horror, and who demanded nothing less than its total and immediate abolition. The uncompromising attitude of such people was translated into action on January 1, 1831, when William Lloyd Garrison ran off the first issue of *The Liberator*. Although Garrison was by no means the first abolitionist, he was certainly the most articulate spokesperson for an immediate

resolution of the problem. He rudely thrust aside the traditional quiet and genteel approach by publicly declaring that he would not use moderation “in a cause like the present.” He insisted that in working toward the goal of total abolition he would be “as harsh as truth” and “as uncompromising as justice.” Garrison and his followers based their new crusade on the premise that slavery was a sin, a moral evil, and a crime against humanity. They refused to accept any resolution of the slavery question that did not call for total and immediate abolition, without payment or compensation.

At first, Garrison’s new movement seemed to be getting nowhere. Looked upon as agitators, cranks, and crackpots who were involving themselves in dangerous and unsavory racial matters that were best left alone, members of the abolition movement were not socially acceptable in most respectable circles. Furthermore, the early issues of *The Liberator* caused hardly a ripple on the placid surface of Boston. Garrison himself complained that he found “contempt more bitter, detraction more relentless, prejudice more stubborn, and apathy more frozen” in the city of Boston than “among the slave owners themselves.” With implacable determination, however, Garrison gradually gathered a small band of devoted followers about him and created the New England Anti-Slavery Society to formulate policy and gather new adherents.

For a while, conservative Bostonians could afford to laugh at Garrison and sneer at his little newspaper. But by the mid-1830s, Garrison’s followers had increased in number to the point that they could not be tolerated much longer. They were causing unsettling effects in the Boston community with their literary attacks on leading citizens of the city who had been supporting the colonization that Garrison dismissed as “White-Manism.” Garrison publicly charged the American Colonization Society with being a secret agency for slaveholders because of its pledge not to interfere with a system “unfathomly deep in pollution” and “encrusted with corroding evil.” To accuse upstanding Brahmin families of complicity with organized slavery was no way to gain acceptance and support in Boston.

There was also the matter of Garrison’s outspoken attacks against the local churches. Insisting that emancipation ought to be “the work of Christianity and the churches,” Garrison was appalled by the lack of support his movement received from organized religion. Since the slavery issue was potentially divisive, most churches tended to either ignore the issue completely or support the moderate goals of colonization. As a result, according to the Transcendentalist minister Theodore Parker, the American pulpit had become “the sworn ally

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of slavery.” Abolitionists attacked the churches for their silence on slavery and often staged “speak-ins” during church services to make their point. They encouraged African Americans to conduct “pray-ins” in all-white churches and to refuse to sit in separate “Negro pews” in those churches that were racially mixed. In addition, they demanded that all Christian churches should not only refuse to accept slaveholders as ministers, but also exclude all slaveholders from communion. Such disruptive tactics were considered outrageous by the conservative community, which felt that Garrison and his followers were undermining organized religion and contributing to the breakdown of moral standards.

Perhaps even more serious was the dangerous rift Garrison was creating between the cotton-producing South and the textile-manufacturing North—between what Charles Sumner labeled the “Lords of the Lash” and the “Lords of the Loom.” Profitable cotton textile plants in places like Waltham, Lowell, and Lawrence had now become an integral part of the Bay State economy and were completely dependent on the plantations of the South for a regular supply of cotton. Acutely aware of their financial leverage, angry Southerners were already threatening serious economic reprisals if their associates in the North did not put an end to this bothersome abolition agitation. “The people of the North must go to hanging these fanatical wretches if they would not lose the benefit of Southern trade,” threatened one Southern newspaper, while another journal conjured up the frightening picture of grass growing in the streets of Lowell. The extensive economic investments of the Brahmin community were clearly much too important to allow this group of radical reformers to go unchallenged and unchecked.

It was not long before denunciation turned to violence. On the afternoon of October 21, 1835, an angry mob burst into a meeting of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society on Washington Street, caught hold of Garrison, and dragged him at the end of a rope through the streets toward Boston Common. Although he was rescued from the mob and put in protective custody at the Leverett Street jail, he was advised to leave town. Of the nature of the mob that attacked him, Garrison had no doubt: “It was planned and executed,” he charged, “not by the rabble, or the workingmen, but by ‘gentlemen of property and standing, from all parts of the city.’” Wendell Phillips described the assault as being carried out “in broadcloth and in broad daylight”; T. L. Nichols, a visitor from Baltimore, reported that the attack had been organized by “merchants and bankers of Boston, assembled on ’Change in State Street.” Clearly, persons close to Boston’s

leading merchants and businessmen had decided to demonstrate their goodwill to their friends and “brethren” in the South.

Garrison and the abolitionists refused to be intimidated; indeed, the violence that flared up during 1835–36, in Boston as well as in other cities throughout the North, actually provided more sympathy than the original antislavery movement had ever been able to muster. The list of new converts grew alarmingly, as persons of wealth and position joined Garrison’s cause. Wendell Phillips (Harvard class of 1831), son of Boston’s first mayor, joined the ranks of the insurgents, as did Edmund Quincy (Harvard class of 1827), son of Boston’s second mayor. The prominent Dr. Henry Ingersoll Bowditch became an abolitionist after witnessing the attack on Garrison. And even the influential merchant John Murray Forbes, long indifferent to the problem of slavery, said that “I changed my whole feeling with regard to it” after learning of the murder in Alton, Illinois, of the abolitionist publisher Elijah Lovejoy. James Russell Lowell and Ralph Waldo Emerson added their literary talents to those of the poet John Greenleaf Whittier and soon became influential participants in the drive for emancipation. Abolitionist membership was increasing every day, and by 1840 there were over two hundred antislavery societies in Massachusetts alone.

Local abolitionists became even more unpopular with the conservative community when they began to focus their moral outrage on the discrimination being practiced by white people against black residents of Boston itself. African Americans had a rich social and cultural history in Massachusetts, especially in Boston. The first black community in Boston was settled in the North End during the seventeenth century on what became known as Copp’s Hill. The area was called “New Guinea,” after that part of the west coast of Africa from which many of them had come. In the Copp’s Hill Burial Ground today are the remains of more than a thousand African Americans, both slaves and free persons, including Prince Hall, founder of the black Masonic Lodge in Boston.

Slavery was a fact of life in North America, and during colonial times some of the most respected white citizens were slaveholders. Although the town never had a formal slave market, in 1737 a Boston newspaper carried an advertisement from a man who offered to sell blacks at “six pence a pound on all he sells, and a reasonable price if he does not sell.” The Reverend Cotton Mather’s congregation gave him a slave worth fifty pounds as a gift. Peter Faneuil, the town’s leading merchant, ordered a house slave from the West Indies in 1739, paying for him with a shipment of fish. And Paul Revere’s grandmother owned a

piece of a slave; in her will she bequeathed to her son “all of my part of and in my negro boy, Nulgar.” Escaped slaves were regularly hunted down by their masters through “wanted” advertisements in colonial newspapers, usually describing the missing slave as a “Congoman,” a “Madagascar boy,” or a “Guinyman.”

In 1761, Mrs. Susanna Wheatley, the wife of a prosperous tailor with a large house on King Street, purchased a sickly eight-year-old black girl who had been transported to Boston as a slave. The child took the name Phillis Wheatley, and within two years she had not only learned to speak and write English, but by the age of fourteen she was publishing poems. She was honored by royalty in England for her literary accomplishments, and in America she received a personal note from General George Washington, for whom she had written a complimentary piece of verse. In 1778 Wheatley married John Peters, described as “a respectable colored man of Boston,” and had three children, all of whom died young. Wheatley’s own poor health continued to deteriorate, and she died in 1784 at the age of thirty-one, the first African-American slave to publish a book of poetry, and the second woman in America to be recognized as a literary figure.*

As the number of African Americans in Boston increased, blacks gradually moved inland, away from the extreme tip of the North End, toward what would become known as the West End. They settled on the north side of Beacon Hill, in a section north of Pinckney Street running from Joy Street down to the Charles River. In 1809, the founding of the first all-black church, originally called the African Meeting House, at 8 Smith Court off Belknap Street drew even more African Americans into this section of town. The church had a decisive influence within Boston’s black community, serving as a gathering place for religious observances as well as becoming a center for the exchange of ideas and information. By 1820, members of Boston’s African-American population were living along most of the north slope of Beacon Hill, in Wards 6 and 7 (called “Nigger Hill”); by 1840 their numbers had reached nearly two thousand.

Although they formed a long-established and proud community, Boston’s African Americans were subject to various forms of economic and social discrimination. Few black artisans could get enough patronage to stay in business on their own, and custom forbade any white merchant or mechanic from

* Anne Bradstreet, the daughter of Governor Thomas Dudley, was an accomplished poet. A collection of her early poems was published in London in 1650 under the title *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America*.



An eight-year-old African girl from Senegal arrived in Boston in 1761 as the property of Mrs. John Wheatley. Taking the name Phillis Wheatley, the young girl quickly learned English and in 1767 published her first poem. In 1773 she traveled to London, where a collection of her poems was published. Back in America, she later received a personal note from General George Washington, for whom she had written a complimentary piece of verse. *Courtesy of the Bostonian Society/Old State House.*

taking on a colored apprentice. Members of the black population, therefore, were relegated to such service occupations as laborers, waiters, caterers, clothing salesman, stevedores, barbers, hairdressers, and laundresses. A Massachusetts law prohibited marriages between blacks and whites, and railroad companies

operating out of Boston normally set aside a Jim Crow car for black travelers. It was customary for theaters, restaurants, and lecture halls to refuse admission to persons of color, and on one occasion even the well-known black orator Frederick Douglass was informed by one restaurant owner: "We don't allow niggers in here." And until African Americans finally built their own church, many of Boston's white churches still provided separate "Negro pews" in remote corners of their structures. One of the most flagrant examples of racial discrimination in nineteenth-century Boston was the segregated school system that prevented black children from attending any of the city's all-white schools. Back in 1789, when they could get no support from the town fathers, Boston's black citizens had set up a small school of their own in the home of Prince Hall. In 1808, a new school was finally constructed as the result of the legacy of a wealthy merchant named Abiel Smith, who had been an admirer of the black schoolmaster Prince Sanders. The Smith School, as it was called, came under the jurisdiction of the Boston Primary School Board, which established it as a primary school exclusively for colored children.

Starting in 1844, a group of Boston's African-American residents began petitioning the school board to remove the racial designation of the Smith School and allow black children to enroll in the other schools of the city. They were encouraged in this effort by the agitation of William Lloyd Garrison and the local Boston abolitionists, as well as by a resolution of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society informing all black people of their legal rights. The Society also offered them all possible aid in securing "the full and equal enjoyment of the public schools." Consistently, however, the majority of the votes of the school board went against the black petitioners, arguing that it was the board's responsibility to keep apart the two races that "the All-Wise Creator had seen fit to establish." The black citizens and their white supporters, however, kept up the fight through community organizations, public petitions, and legal activities.

In the fall of 1849, a resident named Benjamin F. Roberts brought suit against the city of Boston on behalf of his five-year-old daughter. Sarah Roberts had been denied admission to a nearby white school solely on the basis of her color. The resulting case was argued before the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts, with Charles Sumner representing Sarah Roberts, and Robert Morris, the only black member of the Massachusetts Bar, serving as assistant counsel. Despite Sumner's eloquent plea for "equality before the law" and his arguments that both white children and black children suffer from attending separate schools, Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw decided against the plaintiff.

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Even though they had lost the Roberts case, black and white abolitionists renewed their efforts for integrated education in Boston. Switching their attacks from the judicial chamber to the political arena, they were able to bring enough public pressure to bear to persuade state legislators to repudiate the decision of the court. On April 18, 1854, the Great and General Court of Massachusetts passed a law stating that no child, on account of “race, color, or religious opinions,” could be excluded from any public school in the commonwealth. Following passage of this statute, a number of boys from the all-white Phillips School were transferred to the all-black Smith School, and a corresponding number of black boys from the Smith School walked over to take their seats at the Phillips School.

Despite their growing numbers and their occasional victories, however, William Lloyd Garrison and the other reformers of Boston continued to remain a small, almost infinitesimal part of the city’s total population. Most residents never really accepted the radical theories of Garrison and his followers or approved of their disruptive tactics. There were times during the late 1840s and early 1850s, to be sure, when certain incidents created periods of greater sympathy for the antislavery cause. In 1850, for example, to secure passage of the Compromise of 1850, the U.S. Congress passed a new Fugitive Slave Law that allowed federal marshals to apprehend alleged runaway slaves in any state of the Union. Several Northern states, including Massachusetts, demonstrated their opposition to this federal law by enacting their own Personal Liberty Laws. These were state measures that guaranteed a fugitive slave the writ of habeas corpus and trial by jury, and prohibited the use of any state or county jail for the detention of fugitives. Even conservative Boston lawyers who still rejected abolitionism were outraged by violations of the Constitution that allowed human beings to be hunted like animals through the streets of their city.

It was only a year later, in 1851, when the first chapters of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s explosive novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, began to appear in serial form; it went into publication as a book the following year. In skillfully personalizing the issue of human bondage, Beecher Stowe took slavery out of the lecture hall and the senate chamber and brought it into the living room and kitchen of every home in America. In book form, and a short time later in numerous stage performances, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* reached millions of Americans and kept the issue of slavery in the forefront of the national consciousness.

Despite all the tears that were shed for Uncle Tom, however, the Compromise of 1850 still held firm. Political leaders on both sides of the aisle refused

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to allow the slavery issue back into national politics where it could divide parties and endanger the Union. And back in Boston, conservative businessmen continued to correspond with their “Southern brethren,” assuring them that the abolition movement was still getting nowhere and that the slavery question was no longer an issue of consequence. The “conspiracy of silence” was still in effect, but not for long.

The event that shook conservative Bostonians out of their lethargy concerning slavery and sent the nation down the slippery slope to civil war came in January 1854, when Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois proposed his Kansas-Nebraska Bill. By erasing the 36°-30' line established by the Missouri Compromise of 1820, and by allowing slavery to move north of that line, Douglas made slavery a red-hot political issue once again. The Kansas-Nebraska Bill (often referred to at the time as simply the “Nebraska Bill”) set North against South, paved the way for the collapse of the old Whig party, and set the stage for the creation of the new Republican party. Old-time Bostonians who had



Bostonians were outraged when escaped slaves were taken into custody by federal authorities and returned to their owners under the terms of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Seventeen-year-old Thomas Sims was apprehended, spent nine days in the federal courthouse, and on the morning of April 11, 1851, under heavy guard, was marched down to Long Wharf and placed aboard a ship for his return to Georgia and to slavery. *Courtesy of the Bostonian Society/Old State House.*

remained aloof from the unsavory controversy over slavery because of their close financial relations with Southern cotton planters were shocked beyond words by what had happened. "We went to bed one night, old-fashioned, conservative, compromise, Union Whigs," wrote Amos A. Lawrence, "and waked up stark mad Abolitionists."

Business interests throughout the Northeast, for the first time, added their considerable influence to the groundswell of angry public opinion. "We regard the Nebraska movement of Douglas and his backers as one of measureless treachery and infamy," exploded Horace Greeley in his *New York Tribune*, while the *New York Post* observed: "The City of New York is awake at last," as great numbers of bankers and businessmen held mass meetings calling for the defeat of the bill. And in Boston, some three thousand "solid men" of the city gathered at Faneuil Hall on February 3, 1854, to protest the Nebraska Bill and to demand that the nation return to the compromise spirit of 1850. The *Boston Times* reported that a number of prominent merchants, "who had never before given their influence on the anti-slavery side," had signed a public petition calling for the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Act.

One dramatic example of this new sense of outrage in the city came in May 1854 when authorities seized a black man named Anthony Burns as a fugitive slave and prepared to return him to the South. On the day that Burns was marched down State Street to the ship waiting to take him back to slavery, all business was suspended, the buildings were draped in black, and the mood of the city was so menacing that authorities feared mob action. More than two thousand uniformed men—marines, regular army troops, state militia, and city police—lined the streets to prevent a rescue. "The commercial class have taken a new position on the great question of the day," observed the *Boston Times*. But the political skills of Senator Douglas proved more than a match for the irate protests of his Eastern opponents. Supported by President Franklin Pierce and sustained by jubilant Southerners of both parties, the Kansas-Nebraska Act was signed into law by the president on May 30, 1854.

Although they had failed to defeat Douglas in the senate, anti-Nebraska Northerners were determined to beat him on the plains of Kansas. To frustrate the doctrine of popular sovereignty, the Boston textile magnate Amos A. Lawrence organized the New England Emigrant Aid Society as a means of sending a flood of free-soil settlers westward to settle Kansas. Similar emigrant aid societies were soon established by businessmen in other Northern states,

and by the winter of 1854–55 there were over five hundred free-soilers clustered along the Kansas River in such settlements as Lawrence (named after their Boston patron), Manhattan, and Topeka. Insisting that they were now the legally constituted government, the free-soilers were convinced they had ensured the freedom of Kansas. The settlers from the East, however, had not considered the hostile reaction of the pro-slavery settlers just across the border in western Missouri. When the time came for territorial elections, large numbers of “Missouri ruffians” flooded into Kansas, elected a pro-slavery governor, and then elected a pro-slavery territorial legislature. Furious at what they considered a violation of the democratic process, in October 1855 the free-soilers drew up their own free-state constitution, with their own governor and their own legislature. At that point Kansas had two separate and hostile governments, and it was not long before ballots turned into bullets. On May 21, 1856, an armed pro-slavery posse rode into the “Boston abolition town” of Lawrence, Kansas, arrested “treasonous” free-state leaders, and sacked the town. Three days later, John Brown and his free-state followers hacked to death five pro-slavery settlers at Pottawatomie Creek.

As blood started to flow in the Kansas Territory, in May 1856 Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts delivered a blistering two-day oration on what he called “The Crime against Kansas.” He denounced all those who had conspired to turn Kansas into slave territory; he condemned the “slavocracy” of the South for supporting slavery; he attacked Senator Douglas for giving slavery a chance to spread. Sumner went on to question the loyalty of South Carolina and blackened the reputation of Andrew P. Butler, that state’s elderly senator. Infuriated at this insult to his state and the assault on his uncle, Representative Preston Brooks of South Carolina came upon Sumner in the senate chambers on the afternoon of May 22, 1856, viciously beat the Bay State senator with a heavy cane, and left him lying unconscious and bleeding on the senate floor.

The attack on Charles Sumner was a dramatic demonstration of how far apart the two sections of the United States had grown. Except for semi-official statements from the South, expressing regret that the incident had taken place in the senate, most Southerners felt that the arrogant abolitionist had received the horsewhipping he deserved. In the North, however, Sumner was hailed as a hero and a martyr to the cause of freedom. Even those Bostonians who did not approve of Sumner (and there were many), turned out to meet the

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bandaged statesman at the railroad station and invited him to recuperate at their homes. Harvard College provided the finishing touch by conferring upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Law.

Each year after that, one incident followed another, forcing the two sections of the country even further apart. In 1857, the Dred Scott decision, denying African Americans the right to citizenship and declaring that Congress had no right to legislate on matters concerning slavery, created even more turmoil between the North and the South. And in 1858, the highly publicized debates in the Illinois senate race between the Democratic candidate, Stephen A. Douglas, and the Republican candidate, Abraham Lincoln, focused national attention on the controversial issues of slavery, popular sovereignty, and territorial expansion. Any hopes that sectional relations might improve with the passage of time, however, were dashed for good on October 16, 1859. On that day, John Brown and a small band of followers crossed into Virginia and attacked a federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, with the intention of sparking a slave uprising throughout the South. Although the invasion was quickly suppressed, and Brown promptly executed, the dramatic raid made the split between North and South all but final. In the North, antislavery spokesmen hailed John Brown as a Christian martyr and viewed his death as the start of a new era in human rights. Henry Thoreau called him an "angel of light," while Ralph Waldo Emerson claimed that he had made "the gallows glorious like the cross." The South, on the other hand, saw John Brown as a symbol of the hatred of the entire North. With the national conventions in anticipation of the presidential election of 1860 approaching, Southern political leaders began making elaborate preparations to ensure that the "Black Republicans" did not win. They could not afford to have the kind of people who had sent a terrorist like John Brown into the South take over the government of the United States.

The election of 1860 was a hotly contested battle between antislavery Republicans in the North, who nominated Abraham Lincoln as their candidate, and a Democratic party that suffered a fatal split between the moderate forces of Stephen A. Douglas and the secessionist supporters of John C. Breckinridge. When Abraham Lincoln was finally elected president of the United States in November 1860, without an electoral vote from a single slave state, the South refused to remain in a Union in which it saw itself no longer represented. The secession of South Carolina the next month was followed by the secession of six more states from the lower South. This proved a deadly prelude to open warfare, which erupted on April 12, 1861, only a month after the inauguration

of President Lincoln, when Confederate shore batteries opened fire on Fort Sumter, a federal fort in Charleston harbor.

On April 15, three days after the fall of Fort Sumter, President Lincoln called upon the states to supply seventy-five thousand militia to suppress “combinations” in seven states that were “too powerful to be suppressed by the ordinary course of judicial proceedings.” Among the first to respond to the call to arms were the well-trained militia units of Massachusetts. As soon as he was contacted, Governor John A. Andrew called upon four regiments, numbering over three thousand men, to report for active duty. The very next morning, April 16, three companies of the Massachusetts 8th Regiment from Marblehead pulled into Boston by train, in the teeth of a howling blizzard. The following day, April 17, the 6th Regiment, equipped with new rifles, came marching down Beacon Street and halted before the broad steps of the State House. Governor Andrew presented them with their regimental colors and then sent them off to Washington, D.C., to defend the nation’s capital. The 6th Regiment boarded the trains for Baltimore, and two days later their railroad cars were drawn by horses across the city to the depot where they would entrain for Washington.

Maryland was one of those states that lay exactly between the North and the South—one of the “border states” whose loyalties were divided throughout the war. The city of Baltimore had been in a constant state of turmoil ever since the attack on Fort Sumter. One moment, crowds of Confederate sympathizers would be marching through the streets singing “Dixie”; the next moment, Union sympathizers would be chanting “The Star-Spangled Banner.” When they arrived at the Baltimore station, seven companies of the 6th Regiment were taken to the depot on the other side of the city without incident. As the last three Massachusetts companies were being drawn across the city, however, an excited group of Confederate sympathizers spotted them and began pelting the soldiers with rocks and stones as they got out of their cars and formed their ranks. Pistol shots rang out, one of the soldiers crumpled to the ground, and then the troops fired into the crowd and cleared a path with their bayonets. Rejoining the rest of their regiment on the other side, the 6th Massachusetts Regiment continued its determined journey to the nation’s capital.

In the meantime, reports had reached Washington about the clash at Baltimore. Since the final outcome was not yet known, people in the capital did not know if the troops had been able to get across the city to the Washington trains. At this point, with all the railroad bridges destroyed and the telegraph wires cut, Washington, D.C., was in a state of panic. With rioting Maryland

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on one side and Confederate troops under General Beauregard on the other, Washington was desperate to know the whereabouts of the Massachusetts 6th—the only Northern force that could offer the U.S. capital any protection.

A short time after five o'clock that evening, a special train came puffing into the Washington station. With a great cheer, the citizens of Washington recognized the men in the dark-gray overcoats as members of the 6th Massachusetts Regiment. These were the first armed volunteers to come to the defense of the capital, and the residents rushed to take care of the wounded. The rest of the regiment wearily made its way to the senate chamber, where the soldiers dropped to the floor, wrapped themselves in their blankets, and gathered what rest they could in preparation for an uncertain tomorrow. At a moment when everything about him was tinged with gloom and despair, President Abraham Lincoln greatly appreciated this gesture from Massachusetts. Washington had been abandoned; the South was in rebellion; Maryland was in revolt; everything seemed lost. Yet the boys from Massachusetts had arrived—they were there. "You are the only Northern realities," a grateful Lincoln told them. They were the only single Union regiment on hand that could have confronted a Confederate attack on the capital during its six days of complete isolation.

Fortunately, the Confederates did not cross the Potomac, and on April 25 the crack troops of the New York 7th Regiment, smartly dressed in their new gray uniforms, came marching to the relief of the capital. Next came the men of the 1st Rhode Island, clad in gray pants and dark-blue shirts. And, as the 8th Massachusetts Regiment arrived from Annapolis, where they had been repairing railroad lines, the men of the 6th Massachusetts let out a cheer. After handshaking and backslapping, they all went over to the Capitol, where the 8th Regiment was quartered in the huge Rotunda next to their comrades from the 6th, laughing and cheering well into the night.

Back in Massachusetts, the citizens were of one mind and one spirit, mobilized first by the attack on Fort Sumter, and then by the news that their own boys had been fired upon. This unity was especially true when it was realized that the attack on the 6th Massachusetts Regiment had taken place on April 19—the very day that Massachusetts celebrated the anniversary of the shots heard 'round the world at Lexington and Concord. Party differences were put aside for the moment, and old enmities were forgotten, as the Bay State gave its undivided allegiance to President Lincoln and Governor Andrew. Young men rushed to join the colors, older men offered their money and their services to the cause, and women hastened to tend the wounded. No one in the

Bay State could possibly know how long the war would last or what the coming months would bring. But of one thing the people of the commonwealth were certain—Massachusetts had kept the faith.

The Civil War proved to be long, costly, and bitter. Unfortunately, there were very few opportunities for Bostonians to celebrate during the first two years of the conflict when the Confederates seemed to be winning everywhere. The Union defeat at Bull Run in July 1861 came as a terrible shock to those Northerners who were expecting a quick and easy Union victory—the “peace in ninety days” they had talked about. The failure of General George McClellan to capture the Confederate capital at Richmond during the spring of 1862, in his highly touted peninsula campaign, brought local morale even lower during the summer months. Despite a change of command, Northern forces continued to suffer depressing setbacks, and in August 1862 General Robert E. Lee defeated another Union force at the Second Battle of Bull Run. Although the Union army managed to stop Lee’s invasion of the North at the Battle of Antietam the next month, the victory was not at all satisfactory. Not only had the casualties been appalling, but the elusive Confederate general had been allowed to escape with his army into the relative security of northern Virginia.

In addition to the obvious effects the Civil War was having on the battlefields, the conflict was also producing substantial but unintended changes in the social and economic life of Boston. The city’s Irish immigrant community, for example, which now composed nearly one-third of the city’s total population, became a visible and highly desirable part of the war effort. Although a great many of the Irish had little interest in fighting for the freedom of slaves, they had no hesitation in offering their lives to preserve the Union and to support their “adopted country.” Within a few days after the attack on Fort Sumter, Irish-born Thomas Cass, former commander of a local Irish militia group called the Columbian Artillery, offered his services to Governor Andrew, who authorized him to recruit the all-Irish 9th Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry. After a State House ceremony at which the governor presented the colors to “this splendid regiment,” the 9th Regiment marched off to join the other Massachusetts regiments fighting at the front. So successful was the record of the “Fighting Ninth” in battle that Governor Andrew obtained permission to raise another Irish regiment. This time it was the 28th Regiment, which went off to New York, where it joined four other Irish regiments from New York and Pennsylvania to form the Irish Brigade, under the command of Thomas Francis Meagher.

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The impressive patriotism displayed by Boston's Irish immigrants, their heroism on the battlefield, and the financial contributions from prominent Irish Americans in the city brought both recognition and respect from native Bostonians. In July 1861, Boston-born John Bernard Fitzpatrick, the Roman Catholic bishop of Boston, was awarded an honorary doctor of divinity degree from Harvard College, a highly unusual distinction for a prelate of this denomination. In addition, the state legislature modified an earlier ruling that had required Irish-Catholic children to read the Protestant version of the Bible in public schools. These may have been small measures, but in retrospect they were symbols of a change of attitude that would bring about changes in the social and economic status of the Boston Irish once the war was over.

The course of the Civil War also produced significant changes in the traditional lifestyles and expectations of the city's female population. From the moment the fighting started, Boston women immediately rallied to the Union cause and began doing all those things women did, and were expected to do, in time of war. In the quiet of their homes, or in large groups in schoolrooms or church parlors where they formed what became known as "sewing circles," they turned out bandages, blankets, and quilts, as well as such knitted goods as socks, mittens, scarves, gloves, and caps. On many occasions, they attached a personal note or an encouraging message to the boys at the front.

As the tempo of the fighting increased, however, and especially as the number of casualties began to rise beyond all expectations, it became clear that women would be needed in many other wartime roles—especially nursing and hospital care for the wounded. Except for the nursing care provided in a few urban hospitals by the Catholic order of the Sisters of Mercy, there was no organized, professional nursing care available. Into this vacuum moved two Bay State women. One was sixty-year-old Dorothea Lynde Dix, already famous for her work with the mentally ill, who in April 1861 was asked by the Lincoln administration to become superintendent of women nurses for the Union Army and undertake the formation of the nation's first organized nursing corps. Despite opposition from doctors, disagreements with nurses, and controversies with army officers who viewed females as meddlers and obstructionists, Dix remained at her post until the end of the war, when she returned to her work helping the mentally ill.

The other notable woman who responded to the needs of wounded servicemen was Clara Barton. A native of western Massachusetts who had been working in the U.S. Patent Office in Washington, D.C., Barton was appalled

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at the terrible suffering of soldiers as they waited to be transported from the battlefield to the hospital. Determined to bring relief to wounded troops as soon as possible, Barton arrived at the front lines late in August 1862, while the Second Battle of Bull Run was still raging. Barton and her helpers gave water, coffee, and sandwiches to the wounded troops, tending their wounds until the ambulances arrived to take them to hospital trains. Barton went on to nurse the sick and tend the wounded at Harpers Ferry and then at Antietam in early September, becoming famous as the “Angel of the Battlefield”—the woman who would “follow the cannons.”

But however heroic and self-sacrificing the individual acts of courage, the expansion of the war and the enormity of the casualties made it increasingly obvious that larger, more professional and more effectively organized responses were needed to cope with the demands of the conflict. One major support group grew out of the Young Men’s Christian Association of New York, which organized the Christian Commission to coordinate the wartime efforts of hundreds of individual church volunteer groups throughout the United States. Seeking to help as much with spiritual solace as with physical recovery, commission



The extent of the Civil War and the size of the Union Army gave American women unusual opportunities for a greater range of work experience and financial incomes in jobs hitherto reserved for men. This contemporary engraving from *Harper's Weekly* shows Boston women filling cartridge shells on an assembly line at the Watertown Arsenal. *Courtesy of the Boston Public Library, Print Department.*

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members, relying heavily on the contributions of women, visited the sick, comforted the wounded, wrote letters, read the Bible, and conducted prayer services for wounded soldiers.

The second major organization dedicated to medical relief work was the U.S. Sanitary Commission, started in New York City by Frederick Law Olmsted, who would later design Boston's park system. The purpose of the commission was to promptly and efficiently distribute clothing, food, and medicine to Union soldiers. John Murray Forbes of Boston put together his own committee of twenty local businessmen, lawyers, ministers, and physicians to form a local chapter of the Sanitary Commission. Although the executive officers of the commission were men, the most active members were women, who worked to provide troops with essential medical and hospital services not furnished by the army. They worked to get medical equipment to the battlefields, used wagon trains and hospital ships to transfer wounded soldiers to military aid stations, and arranged transportation for disabled troops to permanent hospitals or convalescent stations. By the end of the war, hundreds of women had moved far beyond the limited confines of their traditional "spheres of domesticity," with results that would influence the course of women's history well into the future.

It was upon Boston's small and long-established African-American community, still concentrated on the northern slope of Beacon Hill, that the Civil War had perhaps its deepest and most significant impact. Despite numerous appeals that they be accepted into military service, blacks were not allowed to fight for their own freedom—not even after war had become a reality. But change came with great suddenness. The Battle of Antietam in September 1862 had not provided the decisive victory for which Abraham Lincoln had hoped. It did, however, provide President Lincoln with the opportunity to issue his Emancipation Proclamation, declaring that as of January 1, 1863, all slaves in seceded states would be "then, thenceforward, and forever free." To members of Boston's African-American community, as well to Garrison and the abolitionists, this was the great moment they had anticipated. "Prophets and kings have waited for this day, but died without the sight," said Governor John Andrew. Bells rang and people rejoiced when the proclamation was first announced in September, and then everyone waited for the edict to go into effect three months later.

On the evening of January 1, 1863, there was a gala at the Boston Music Hall, where both blacks and whites gathered to await the great moment. When the telegraph lines reported that President Lincoln had actually put his signature

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on the historic document, the auditorium erupted into cheers for Lincoln and Garrison. Ralph Waldo Emerson stepped forward to recite the “Boston Hymn” as an ode to justice and liberation:

To-day unbind the captive.
So only are ye unbound;
Lift up a people from the dust.
Trump of their rescue, sound!

After a singing of the Hallelujah Chorus from Handel’s *Messiah*, the emotional evening of celebration came to an end, with most of the participants feeling that they had ushered in a new era of American life.

Since the terms of the Emancipation Proclamation provided that former slaves were now authorized to be “received into the armed forces of the United States,” Governor Andrew and other state leaders felt it appropriate that an African-American regiment should be established to highlight the new status of black persons. The 54th Massachusetts Regiment was the first black regiment raised by any Northern state, although men were recruited from other states to fill the ranks of the unit. Indeed, so many men came pouring into the Bay State that another black regiment, the 55th, was later organized. Believing that the leader of the 54th Regiment should be an officer of “the highest tone and honor,” Governor Andrew offered the command to Robert Gould Shaw, a member of one of Boston’s oldest and most respected families. An abolitionist since his student days at Harvard, and already a veteran of several battles, young Shaw accepted the command. Later that summer, Colonel Shaw died leading his courageous regiment in a charge against an almost impregnable earthwork at Fort Wagner, at the gates of Charleston, South Carolina. After the war, Boston would commemorate the gallantry of Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Regiment of African-American troops with a magnificent bronze plaque by the noted American sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens, placed opposite the State House on the crest of Beacon Hill.

Slowly the tide of conflict began to turn, and after the Union victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg in July 1863, the news from the battlefield became more encouraging. Once General Ulysses S. Grant assumed overall command, there was a new sense of direction and determination to the Union war effort. Although the costs were still high, and the casualties still terrible, by the close of 1864 there were indications that the end could not be too far away.

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Once President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation went into effect in January 1863, African-American citizens had their first opportunity to serve in the armed forces. Private Abraham F. Brown (above) was one of many volunteers who joined the 54th Massachusetts Regiment when it was established. The heroism of this all-black regiment was later commemorated with the memorial to Colonel Robert Gould Shaw by Augustus Saint-Gaudens, located on Beacon Street directly opposite the State House. *Courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society.*

General William Tecumseh Sherman completed his devastating march from Chattanooga to Atlanta by September 1864, and then pushed on all the way to the seaport of Savannah by December. And early in 1865, his great war machine was turning around and preparing to march up through the Carolinas. Out in the Shenandoah Valley, General Philip Sheridan's hard-riding cavalry had destroyed most of the Rebel fighting units and put the torch to the once-fertile valley. And General Grant himself, despite frightful losses, was now entrenched at Petersburg, hammering on the door of the Confederate capital of Richmond.

After the first of the year in 1865, the people of Boston read their morning newspapers with a definite sense of anticipation as the Union ring grew tighter around the hard-pressed Confederates. In mid-February, General Sherman captured Charleston, South Carolina, and Boston's 54th Massachusetts Regiment was one of the first federal contingents to enter the city. Three days later, troops from the 55th Regiment marched into the stricken city, with Lieutenant George Thompson Garrison, son of the Boston abolitionist, commanding one of the companies. The immense irony of the situation was not lost on the Boston abolitionist Wendell Phillips, who was beside himself with joy. "Can you conceive a bitterer drop that God's chemistry could mix for the son of the Palmetto State than that a Massachusetts flag and a colored regiment should take possession of Charleston?" he asked. On April 3, the news that General Grant had finally taken the Rebel capital of Richmond, Virginia, sent the city into wild rejoicing. Flags went up all over town, bells pealed for a solid hour at noon, and at one o'clock a hundred-gun salute was fired on Boston Common. Six days later, the joy turned to absolute delirium with the news that General Lee and his entire army had surrendered to General Grant at Appomattox Court House. Once again, the flags appeared everywhere, people fired guns off in public, buildings were decorated, and schools, banks, and offices were closed. Impromptu celebrations were held all over town, bands played patriotic music, and at night the city was treated to displays of fireworks. The war was finally over! It seemed that nothing could possibly happen to dampen the city's joy and enthusiasm.

Less than a week later, however, the once-joyful city was in deep mourning. On Saturday morning, April 15, 1865, Boston received the shocking news that President Abraham Lincoln had been assassinated—a catastrophe that came, as one newspaper put it, "like a thunderbolt from a clear sky." Those flags that only the day before had fluttered joyously over the city in celebration of victory now drooped silently at half-mast, while bells tolled out their mournful

dirge. The faces of men and women that only the day before had been radiant with joy were now bathed with tears and twisted in anguish. "As one passes along the street," noted the *Boston Journal*, "strong men are met with their eyes dimmed with tears." On Wednesday, April 19, the funeral of Abraham Lincoln took place in the nation's capital. On that day, everything in Boston was closed down in solemn tribute to the occasion. Horsecars were withdrawn from service, and the operations of the steam railroads were suspended between noon and two o'clock. Churches throughout the city held special services that were attended by overflow throngs of people; every house displayed some public mark of mourning. Later in the day, several thousand people held an impromptu ceremony on Boston Common to express their grief.

At the end of the year, late in December 1865 on Forefathers' Day, commemorating the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth 245 years earlier, a "Return of the Flags" ceremony was held in Boston. In a procession that included all divisions in which every Bay State regiment was represented, the regimental flags of each unit were carried through the streets of Boston to the State House. As each formation came to a halt, a color bearer stepped forward from the ranks, marched up the steps, and presented the colors to Governor John Andrew. The banners, many of them tattered and bloodied, were taken into the State House, where they were draped around the pillars in Doric Hall. Later, they were all placed in Memorial Hall, or the Hall of Flags, where they continue to give silent testimony to the role Massachusetts played in the preservation of the Union. The Civil War marked the end of one era in Boston's history, and would clearly mark the beginning of another.

BOOK THREE

Melting Pot



7

Winds of Change

THE four years of the Civil War had changed the shape and direction of American history, and had also brought many changes for the Boston community. Some changes were welcome, exciting, and anticipated; others were discouraging, disappointing, and unexpected. One thing was certain: things would never be the same again—for Boston or for the nation.

No other war in the history of the United States had ever had such a direct and personal effect on so many people as did the Civil War. By the time the fighting had stopped, over half a million Americans were dead—out of a population of about thirty-one million. This conflict between the states killed more Americans in four years than all the wars fought in the twentieth century; and, because the total population was so much smaller in 1860, the Civil War had a far greater impact on the nation. This was truly a war that touched every city, every town, every family in America.

The Civil War had taken a generation of young Boston men out of their isolated, insular, and parochial surroundings and sent them far away from home for as long as three or four years. This disruptive experience obviously produced sociological as well as psychological effects on young soldiers. They had seen

other places, talked with different people, experienced unfamiliar events, faced danger, suffered wounds, confronted death—and then, after all that, returned to their homes in Boston and Cambridge to a rapidly changing America.

A great many of the Boston women who had been involved in the Civil War had also gone through remarkable and stimulating experiences that gave them new skills and proficiencies. What they had done in the war dramatically changed the way they saw themselves as women and provided new outlooks on their purpose in the world. The war had given many Boston women the opportunity to travel freely, to speak publicly before mixed audiences, to assume managerial positions in national wartime relief agencies, to engage in active politics, and to hold their own with government officials and military bureaucrats. These experiences gave women the kind of confidence and self-assurance that they would carry into professional activities, educational careers, and social reform movements well into the twentieth century.

For Boston's African-American community, on the other hand, the Civil War had perhaps raised higher expectations but delivered fewer substantial results. The coming of the war, the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation, the end of slavery assured by the Thirteenth Amendment, and the guarantee of full civil and political rights guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment all seemed to offer black Americans a full and equal share in the promise of America. Soon, though, it was clear that the inspiring rhetoric would produce few meaningful results—even in Boston. Black Bostonians were still confined to their back-of-the-hill community along the slopes of "Nigger Hill," still prevented from becoming apprentices in the skilled professions, and still denied the kind of social acceptance that was consistent with their political rights. Although the Republican party had succeeded in eradicating the institution of slavery as a direct result of the war, during the postwar years it soon tired of its role as the champion of equal rights and failed to transform the social structure of the South. For the sake of political survival in the disputed election of 1876–1877, the Republicans agreed to allow African Americans to be deprived of their constitutional rights and reduced to the category of second-class citizens. From then on, the disease of racism was allowed to fester silently and secretly under the surface of the American body politic like a deadly cancerous growth. It would erupt a century later to engulf the nation in racial strife and bitter, violent, and deadly social confrontation.

For the members of Boston's business community who had become loyal Republicans and supported the Lincoln administration's efforts to preserve the

Union, the Civil War had provided substantial prosperity during wartime and seemed to promise unlimited financial prospects in the future. The secession of the South and the departure of Southern congressmen had opened up the national legislative system to a stream of Republican economic programs that changed the face of America well into the twentieth century. In the absence of Southern opposition, the Republicans were able to create a national currency system and to organize a national banking system. The Homestead Act offered free public land to settlers who wanted it; the Morrill Act created a system of land-grant colleges; and the Pacific Railroad Act provided thousands of acres of public land for the construction of transcontinental railroads. Taking advantage of secession, the Republican congress had drafted, in effect, what one historian called “a blueprint for modern America” by endorsing an industrialized, capital-intensive, national business structure.

Ironically, however, the very industrial system the Boston businessmen endorsed so enthusiastically at war’s end was one that quickly left a parochial and outmoded Bay State economy in the lurch. The war, according to Harvard’s Charles Eliot Norton, proved to be “a cataclysm” that deepened the breach between the “old period” and the new, between the past and the present. Before the Civil War, much of the nation had looked to Boston, the “Hub of the Universe,” as a leading center of diversified industrial investment and ingenious capital enterprise. By the 1870s, however, the nation’s “Age of Big Business” was in full swing, with more railroads, larger factories, more sophisticated machinery, greater production, and higher profits than ever before. In almost no time, the Bay State’s financial efforts rapidly faded into insignificance compared with the gigantic corporate structures and incredible personal fortunes being accumulated by such new entrepreneurial giants as Cornelius Vanderbilt, John D. Rockefeller, and Andrew Carnegie. The fortunes being made in new enterprises dwarfed the incomes derived from old New England shipyards, traditional family businesses, and deteriorating textile factories. It was clear that the old Yankee dollar was no longer what it used to be. “We are vanishing into provincial obscurity,” moaned Barrett Wendell of Boston. “America has swept from our grasp. The future is beyond us.”

Not only had the nation changed industrially and technologically, but the tone and flavor of postwar American society had also been transformed. In an age characterized more and more by material forces and secular philosophies, Puritan Christianity’s old moral concepts seemed alarmingly out of place. Many of the old Boston families viewed the postwar industrial period as completely

alien, in contrast to the prewar society in which they had lived and flourished. Traditional moral principles, ethical practices, and cultural standards suddenly seemed to have completely degenerated. The gentlemanly and democratic *laissez-faire* system espoused by Thomas Jefferson had become a highly competitive dog-eat-dog jungle where only “the fit” were entitled to survive. The idealistic doctrine of self-reliance preached by Ralph Waldo Emerson and his Transcendental followers had been reduced to mere self-aggrandizement by the new giants of industry. Jefferson’s “spirit of independence” was now interpreted as Vanderbilt’s “The Public Be Damned.” “The leaders of Massachusetts sixty, seventy, eighty years ago were men who had *done* something,” asserted Edward Everett Hale. “The leaders of society now,” he scoffed, were those whose “most prominent business is to unlock a safe in a safety deposit vault, cut off coupons from their bonds, and carry them to be cashed.” The lavish and often vulgar display of personal wealth, gaudy mansions, and the all-pervading influence of big business in the corrupt affairs of the nation during the Grant administration convinced many Bostonians that the “new” America was not their America. It would have been better, Charles Eliot Norton told his class in the history of the fine arts at Harvard College, “had we never been born in this degenerate and unlovely age.”

To make matters worse, not only was the nation as a whole changing, but so was the traditional old city of Boston itself. In terms of the size, the shape, the scope, and the very character of the venerable old town, Boston was going through such remarkable changes that it was hardly recognizable anymore. Despite the pressures and sacrifices of the Civil War, Boston had continued with an expansive building boom that had been going on since the nation had secured its independence. During the early 1800s, the construction of Bulfinch’s new State House had stimulated development of a fashionable residential district in the Beacon Hill area. This community was further expanded when nearby Pemberton Hill was reduced to provide residences for wealthy businessmen and retired sea captains.

To provide even more living space for the city’s increasing population, developers dumped tons of gravel into the muddy waters along the south side of the thin strip of land (the “Neck”) that connected the old Shawmut Peninsula to the Roxbury mainland. As early as the 1840s, the South End began to take shape as an attractive and well-designed community into which wealthy Boston families could move when there was no more room on Beacon Hill. Architect Gridley Bryant chose “the modern style of Renaissance architecture” when

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This nineteenth-century view shows the South End's Blackstone Square, with the spire of the Shawmut Avenue Universalist Church in the background. This was one of a series of attractive squares and fountains that developers hoped would attract wealthy patrons to the new South End. The subsequent creation of the Back Bay, however, put an end to optimistic expectations for the future of the South End. *Courtesy of the Bostonian Society/Old State House.*

he designed the new City Hospital on the South End's Harrison Avenue in 1861. The main administration building, with its impressive dome and portico, was flanked by mansard-roofed pavilions, creating what historian Walter Muir Whitehill later called "the handsomest development in the South End."

When the city's rapidly growing Roman Catholic population became too large for its modest church on Franklin Street in downtown Boston, it was the South End that Bishop John Fitzpatrick selected as the place to build a much larger Gothic cathedral. The members of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) also chose the South End for their imposing granite Church of the Immaculate Conception, which the architectural historian Douglass Shand-Tucci has described as a splendid example of how mid-century American

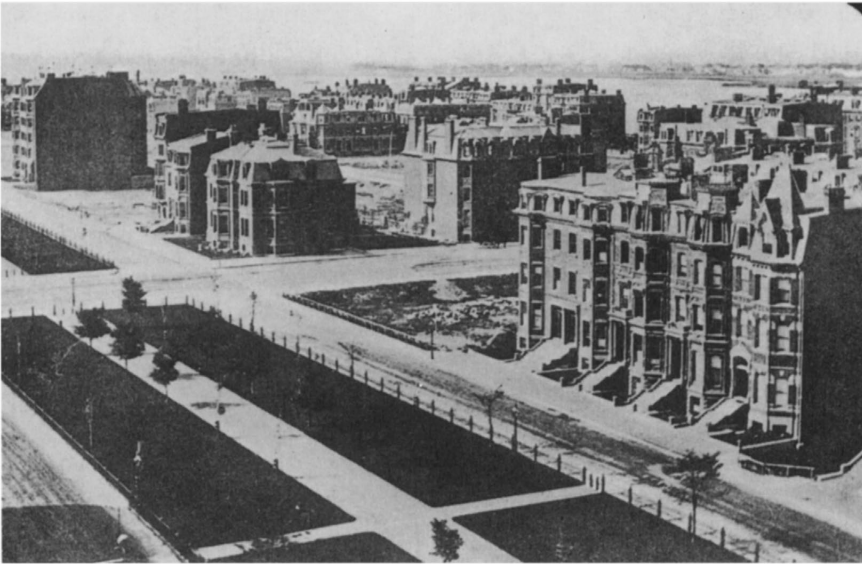
architects “translated the Classical tradition into the idiom of their own time.” Two years later, in 1863, the South End was also the site for the first structure to house Boston College, designed to provide a higher education for the sons of Irish immigrants. The Jesuits believed that the South End, with its “better class of houses,” would be a promising part of the city for such an institution. A similar conviction also persuaded a number of Protestant denominations to seek out locations in the South End. A new Unitarian church was built on West Newton Street; the South Congregational Church constructed a new building on Union Park Street in 1862; a building for a Methodist church was completed the same year on Tremont Street; the First Presbyterian Church went up on Columbus Avenue; and a new structure for the Evangelical Lutheran Zion Church was erected at the corner of Shawmut Avenue and Waltham Street.

But the bright and promising future of the South End as the city’s most promising and lucrative real estate venture was suddenly and unexpectedly eclipsed by spectacular developments across the way in Boston’s Back Bay. Motivated by the private impulse for immense real estate profits, as well as by the public desire to clear up a serious health hazard, a major effort was undertaken to fill in the waters along the north side of Boston Neck. For years the ebb and flow on the tidal flats had left the sewage dumped into the basin exposed to the sun and open air. This produced what one city health report called “nothing less than a great cesspool” that acted as a giant receptacle for “all the filth of a large and constantly increasing population.” To alleviate this disgusting condition, as well as to provide additional housing space near the city’s center, in 1857 a special state commission recommended the “Filling up and sale of [Back Bay] lands.” The project was begun in 1858, when earth from the Needham sand hills and gravel pits, nine miles to the west, was carried to Boston in railroad cars to begin creating what would eventually become 580 acres of brand new land.

In developing the vast acreage of the new Back Bay, the commissioners followed an impressive design, usually credited to the architect Arthur Gilman, that conveyed a distinctively Parisian flavor. In looking to the city’s postwar development, observes Douglass Shand-Tucci, “Boston suddenly surrendered to a passion for things French.” Letters and memoirs from many traveling Bostonians during the 1850s reflected their admiration for the ways in which Emperor Napoleon III had beautified the city of Paris—the expansive new boulevards; the magnificent public buildings; the new Louvre, housing the nation’s art collection; the imposing new opera house, with its ornate decora-

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tions and brilliant gaslights—and made Boston planners want to emulate the City of Lights. In laying out the Back Bay, therefore, architect Arthur Gilman envisioned long vistas, residences fashioned in the Second-Empire style, and a broad central boulevard reminiscent of the Champs Elysées. The main thoroughfare, Commonwealth Avenue, was two hundred feet wide, running west from Arlington Street at the foot of the Public Garden. Beacon Street and Boylston Street extended westward on either side of the boulevard, and two new streets, Marlborough and Newbury, also ran parallel to Commonwealth Avenue. From the very start, the Back Bay was clearly to be the most fashionable and luxurious residential section in the expanding city. The extensive French influence consciously reflected a Parisian elegance that wealthy Bostonians were convinced would make their city, as one modern analyst expressed it, “the cultural center of the United States, and one of the greatest cities in the world.”



During the 1860s, despite the crisis of the Civil War, Bostonians went ahead with their plans to fill in the Back Bay and create a fashionable new neighborhood that would rival the boulevards and buildings of Paris. With Commonwealth Avenue serving as the city's Champs Elysées and the mansions done in Second French Empire style, the Parisian influence was very much in evidence as Boston sought to become a “world city.” *Courtesy of the Bostonian Society/Old State House.*

The filling-in of land on either side of the Neck had caused the old Shawmut peninsula to become an integral and, as time went on, an almost indistinguishable part of the mainland. But it was with the annexation of a number of adjoining towns that Boston suddenly experienced a tremendous physical growth. During the postwar years, large numbers of Boston residents, many of them Irish immigrants, abandoned the congested waterfront districts and moved into the nearby suburbs. Very soon they were raising demands for such services as water, sewers, streets, schools, hospitals, police security, and fire protection. As a result, several towns sought to annex themselves to the City of Boston in order to obtain the vital municipal services they were unable to provide for themselves.

In those days, annexation required the approval of the state legislature and voter approval in both Boston and the town seeking annexation. Roxbury was the first to vote for annexation in 1866 and formally became a part of Boston in 1868. Dorchester followed two years later, while in 1873 Charlestown and Brighton agreed to annexation, as did West Roxbury, whose residents had debated the issue for several years. Largely as a result of this remarkable annexation movement, Boston's population jumped from 140,000 in 1865 to 341,000 ten years later—an increase of more than 200,000 people in only ten years. Once a small community of some 780 acres of land, Boston now spread over almost 24,000 acres—nearly thirty times its original size. Boston had definitely changed. It was no longer the “tight little island” that had always made it so distinctive, so aloof, so parochial. It was something else entirely.

If the postwar changes had been limited to those of a financial and topographical nature, perhaps most native Bostonians would have made the necessary adjustments with a certain amount of grace, if not good humor. But the changes went much deeper than that, and their obvious consequences provoked a sense of impending doom. Especially alarming was the way in which the flood of European immigrants, which had started during the decades before the Civil War, was picking up again and threatening to inundate the whole city with strange faces and even stranger ways. The fact that a large percentage of these newcomers were from Ireland increased even further the feelings of fear and anxiety spreading through a native population whose staunch Puritan background made them ill-equipped to deal with outsiders.

For generations it had been comforting for the “better elements” of Boston to reflect upon the purity of their culture and the homogeneity of their race. They could take pride in the fact that no persons of Irish birth, or members of

any other of the “lesser breeds,” had intruded upon their illustrious heritage. Successions of Harvard-trained, New England–bred historians had assured their readers quite categorically that no Irish were to be found in North America much before 1830. The inhabitants of New England at the time of the Revolution, according to John Gorham Palfrey in his *History of the Revolution* (1865), were “wholly English.” Not a single county in all England, he wrote, had “purer English blood than theirs.” Some twenty-five years later, the eminent historian John Fiske, writing in *The Beginnings of New England* (1889), also agreed that the Puritan exodus to America had been “purely and exclusively English.” A short time later, in *The Story of the Revolution* (1898), Henry Cabot Lodge agreed that those American colonials who had fought for independence were “almost of pure English blood, with a small infusion of Huguenots and a slight mingling, chiefly in New Hampshire, of Scotch-Irish from Londonderry.”

In fact, however, many immigrants from Ireland had come to New England as early as the seventeenth century. Contemporary shipping records, passenger lists, town records, minutes of town meetings, church registers, and graveyard epitaphs list family names that are distinctively Irish. On the basis of such sources, as well as on data taken from the 1790 federal census, modern historians estimate that the total number of those persons who had come from all parts of Ireland to America by the time of the Revolution was somewhere between 350,000 and 400,000. At first, during the early 1600s, it was Catholics who left Ireland from such southern ports as Cork and Kinsale. As indentured servants, they were pledged to complete several years of bonded labor in return for free passage either to the West Indies or to such early American colonies as Virginia and Maryland.

During the later decades of the 1600s, however, the number of non-Catholics emigrating from ports in northern Ireland greatly exceeded that of Catholics leaving from southern ports. By the start of the 1700s, Protestants constituted the major source of Irish emigration to the New World. Most of these northern Protestants were the descendants of original Scottish settlers who had been “planted” on confiscated Irish lands in rebellious Ulster by King James I. Their numbers were augmented later in the 1600s by some 50,000 additional families, which also came from Scotland. Life in Ireland was difficult for these transplanted Scots, who had settled on lands that had been taken away from the native Irish peoples. Because they were not Roman Catholics, and because they were seen as an overseas arm of English oppression, the Ulster

Irish were hated and despised by the Catholic majority. That was to be expected. What was not expected, however, was the shabby treatment they received from an English government to which they were loyal. As fundamentalist Protestants, mainly Presbyterians, they found themselves subject to many of the same kinds of punitive laws the Church of England leveled against Roman Catholics. As landowners, artisans, small businessmen, and enterprising merchants, they struggled against high rents, repressive taxes, and discriminatory trade laws that unfairly benefited the English economy.

Disillusioned and disheartened about their prospects for the future, by the early 1700s the Protestants of northern Ireland sought greater religious freedom, political independence, and economic opportunity across the Atlantic. During 1715–1720, high rents, bad weather, and crop failures produced heavy emigration from Ulster; another wave followed from 1725 to 1729. Between 1730 and 1769, perhaps as many as 70,000 Presbyterians sailed to the colonies, while in the next five years, from 1770 to 1775, emigration from northern Ireland reached a peak, with some 30,000 Ulster Presbyterians escaping high rents and wholesale evictions. Scholars estimate that during the colonial period, between 200,000 and 250,000 Ulster Irish emigrated to North America, with about half that number arriving during the sixty years between 1717 and 1776.

The earliest immigrants from Ireland generally stayed clear of the Boston area, where residents were predominantly Anglo-Saxon and decidedly hostile to the Irish, whom they considered members of a barbaric and inferior race. The first arrivals from Ireland, therefore, tended to settle in the less populated regions of New England—places like Bangor, Belfast, and Limerick in Maine; Dublin, Londonderry, and Hillsboro County in New Hampshire; and Orange County in Vermont. Gradually, however, the Ulster Irish were accepted into the Boston community, especially after the new Massachusetts charter of 1691 specified that political representation be based not on religious affiliation but on income and property. The fact that most of the Ulster Irish spoke English rather than Gaelic made them more acceptable, as did the fact that as merchants, commercial farmers, and enterprising businessmen their lifestyle seemed to be compatible with the traditional Puritan work ethic.

As early as 1657, a Scots Charitable Society was formed in Boston to assist the poorer members of the community, and in 1724 the Irish Charitable Society was created for similar purposes, insisting that members be “natives of Ireland,” “Protestants,” and “inhabitants of Boston.” Three years later, the Ulsterites established the Irish Presbyterian Church in an old building not far from

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the waterfront, and in 1744 moved to more spacious quarters on Long Lane, only a short distance from the Town House. By vigorously supporting the colonial rebellion against acts of British oppression—similar to the restrictive laws that had forced them to leave Ireland—and then by taking an active role in the subsequent American Revolution, the Irish Presbyterians finally won recognition as loyal and patriotic Americans. The political ascendancy of the first wave of Irish Protestants was perhaps most dramatically illustrated in 1807 when an Ulster Protestant named James Sullivan, an influential lawyer whose father had emigrated from Ireland in the mid-1700s, was elected governor of Massachusetts. His brother, John Sullivan, had risen to the rank of brigadier general in the Continental Army and had served as an aide to General George Washington during the evacuation of Boston.

While Protestant Irish from the northern counties dominated the exodus from Ireland during the 1700s, the number of Catholics emigrating from the southern counties, by contrast, was decidedly small. The modern historian Kerby Miller suggests that during the period from 1700 to 1776, Roman Catholics constituted only one-fifth to one-fourth of the immigrants from Ireland. The reasons for this obvious reluctance to emigrate are fairly obvious. For one thing, oppressive English land policies had reduced most Irish Catholics to the level of impoverished tenant farmers, migratory workers, and unskilled laborers. They were often seen roaming the countryside in search of land, food, and work. Very few of them had money enough to afford the long and hazardous passage across the stormy Atlantic.

Then, too, many were discouraged by the pessimistic reports coming back from North America describing the extent and intensity of anti-Irish and anti-Catholic feelings among the predominantly Anglo-Saxon colonials. Centuries of bitter political conflict and savage military struggles between English invaders and Irish defenders had caused the English to regard Irish Catholics not only as members of a blasphemous and heretical religion, but also as political subversives engaged in a conspiracy to destroy the monarchy and overthrow the English government. These convictions were carried to America, where they conditioned the responses of Puritan political and religious leaders. Throughout New England, Papists (as Catholics were called) were not only excluded from liberties extended to most other settlers, but were also subjected to specific penalties similar to the Penal Laws then already in force throughout the British Isles. In Massachusetts, especially, Catholics were placed under unusually severe limitations, and according to a law passed by the General

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Court in 1700, Catholic priests were subject to imprisonment and possible death if found in the colony.

In most cases, those Irish Catholics who did come into Boston from the southern parts of Ireland during the mid-1700s were a poor, hardworking class. Since money was scarce and most Irish Catholics were unable to pay for their transportation across the Atlantic, many were “bound out” as indentured servants under an agreement to work out the cost of their passage when they arrived in America. Among those recorded on passenger lists were artisans, masons, bricklayers, carpenters, cabinetmakers, tailors, shoemakers, stonecutters, hatters, weavers, and blacksmiths, as well as husbandmen, farmhands, and common laborers. Some of the women were described as cooks, dressmakers, seamstresses, and household servants. Those who had the temerity to display any public evidence of their papist beliefs were usually regarded with fear and suspicion by members of a Puritan community that continued to regard Catholicism as both a subversive political menace and a fearsome religious heresy.

It was not until the outbreak of the War for Independence that New Englanders began to exhibit some measure of tolerance for Europeans in general, and for Roman Catholics in particular. In November 1775, when he arrived in Cambridge to take official command of the Continental Army, General George Washington ordered his officers and men to refrain from taking part in that “ridiculous and childish” custom known as “Pope’s Night.” This was a popular anti-papist celebration held annually on November 5 that commemorated the gunpowder plot, parodied various Catholic rituals, and climaxed with a public burning of the pope in effigy.* Since he hoped to secure an alliance with France and with French Canadians in the colonial rebellion against Great Britain, Washington pointed out the “impropriety” of insulting the religious beliefs of those people in such a “monstrous” and inexcusable fashion.

Unofficial but invaluable assistance from the French court of King Louis XVI in the early stages of the fighting also helped make Catholicism a little more acceptable in the colonies. And when the government of France agreed to recognize the United States and make a formal treaty of military and commercial

* On November 5, 1606, a group of disgruntled Catholics, among them Guy Fawkes, made an unsuccessful attempt to blow up King, Lords, and Commons in one spectacular explosion. After the attempt failed, English Protestants celebrated the end of the “gunpowder plot” with an annual demonstration on Guy Fawkes Day.

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alliance early in 1778, many Americans showed a willingness to adopt a more tolerant attitude toward the beliefs and practices of their traditional enemy. On a visit to Boston in 1778, the French admiral Comte Charles-Henri d'Estaing and members of his fleet were hospitably received and graciously honored by leading citizens of the town, and were later invited to dine at the Beacon Street home of John Hancock. And when one of d'Estaing's young officers was accidentally killed ashore while attempting to break up a fight between local ruffians and some French bakers, apologetic Bostonians allowed the lieutenant the extraordinary honor of a burial in the town's venerable King's Chapel.

By the time the United States had finally secured its independence from Great Britain in 1783, therefore, there was a sufficient atmosphere of forbearance in Boston to accommodate a handful of Roman Catholics, who had begun to practice their religion openly. Numbering fewer than a hundred, mostly French and Irish, they attended Mass in a small brick structure that had formerly been a French Huguenot chapel, located on the south side of School Street a few doors down from Washington Street. For their spiritual direction, they had to make do with several transient French clerics until the arrival of two French priests—Fr. François Antoine Matignon in 1792, and Fr. Jean-Louis Lefebvre de Cheverus in 1796—whose charm, kindliness, and priestly devotion captured the hearts of most Bostonians. When the lease on the old church was about to expire in 1799, the Catholics of the town purchased a site on nearby Franklin Street where, on March 17, 1800, the ground was broken for the first Catholic church in Boston. Many of the town's Protestant residents contributed generously to the undertaking, and young Charles Bulfinch furnished the architectural plans free of charge for the new Church of the Holy Cross, which was finally dedicated in September 1803. The report, five years later, that Pope Pius VII had created Boston as a separate episcopal see, and had named the popular Cheverus as its first bishop, was welcome news to the residents of the town who had come to love and respect the hardworking French priest.

Although the number of Catholics in the town continued to increase slightly every year, the newcomers were still manageable enough in size, and useful enough in the services they provided, to ensure their continued toleration. Many of the French, for example, served as skilled watchmakers, candy makers, cooks, caterers, waiters, musicians, and dancing instructors; the Irish functioned as blacksmiths, glassblowers, grocers, clothiers, and tailors. A number of unskilled laborers had been brought over from Ireland to do the pick-and-shovel work involved in various major construction projects during the early

1800s—the filling in of coves and inlets, the cutting down of old Beacon Hill to make way for the new State House, and the construction of the Mill Dam at the outer end of the town to increase the land area for new real estate developments.

It was not long, however, before larger numbers of Irish began to cross the Atlantic and join their friends and relatives in America. With the end of the War of 1812, and especially after the collapse of grain prices that followed in the wake of Napoleon's defeat in 1815, the landlords of Ireland made a major effort to sustain their prosperous wartime incomes. They either raised rents on their property to unrealistic levels or else converted their fields into pastureland for the grazing of sheep and cattle. One result of this preemptive postwar land policy was a marked acceleration of large-scale emigration of bankrupt farmers and displaced laborers from all parts of Ireland, but especially from the rural counties in the south and west. From 1825 through 1830, approximately 125,000 people emigrated from Ireland to the United States—an average of 20,000 a year. Over 30,000 of these arrivals came to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, with the result that by 1830 there were over 8,000 Irish Catholics living in Boston.

The dramatic growth in the number of Irish Catholics in Boston during the late 1820s and early 1830s was disturbing to native Bostonians simply as a religious phenomenon. Taken in conjunction with the numerous social and economic problems the Catholics helped to intensify, their arrival was now viewed with great alarm by the older inhabitants of the city. During the late 1820s, there were sporadic outbreaks of violence against persons and property along Ann Street, Broad Street, and other Irish neighborhoods near the waterfront. Throughout the summer months of July and August 1825, for example, the *Boston Advertiser* reported “disgraceful riots” taking place almost every night by gangs who broke windows, damaged furniture, and destroyed several small houses. The mayor and aldermen finally had to station six constables in the Irish district from ten o'clock at night until morning in order to keep the peace.

Tensions persisted, however, and the continued presence of so many Roman Catholics in the old Puritan city conjured up the old fears of a Catholic menace. The Boston Sunday School Union constantly predicted the dangers of a papist revival in America, the Reverend Lyman Beecher called upon “Native Americans” to be on their guard against a “Catholic conspiracy” on this side of the Atlantic, and in 1834 an angry mob burned down the Ursuline Convent in Charlestown while hundreds stood around and cheered. Three years later, in June 1837, violence broke out in the very heart of the city when a company

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During the mid-1840s, a deadly fungus ruined Ireland's entire potato crop, the food upon which the poor families of the rural areas depended for sustenance. Faced with a devastating famine, unprecedented numbers scraped together whatever money they could and booked passage to America. Often they left in vessels so poorly constructed they were called "coffin ships." *From the Illustrated London News, May 10, 1851.*

of firemen, returning from a call, clashed with an Irish funeral procession traveling along the same street. In moments, what started out as a fistfight had mushroomed into a full-scale riot, reportedly involving some fifteen thousand persons, as residents from both sides spilled out of their houses and into the streets to participate in the battle. The “Broad Street Riot” was finally brought to a halt only when Mayor Samuel Eliot called in the state militia, complete with cavalry, to disperse the rioters and restore order to the city.

But if “Native Americans” were alarmed at this first wave of Irish-Catholic immigration during the 1820s and 1830s, they were thunderstruck at what took place during the 1840s and 1850s, when the catastrophic potato blight—known as the Great Famine—brought death and starvation in Ireland and sent a new wave of emigrants seeking shelter and safety on the shores of the New World. By the hundreds of thousands, the Irish poured into America during the “Black Forties,” huddled together in the dark stinking holds of cargo ships. Their small savings completely used up by the price of passage, they landed sick and destitute at Boston and at other East Coast ports—too poor to move on, too desperate to care. Living in squalor, herded together in the congested streets of the North End or in the dilapidated houses of the once-fashionable Fort Hill district, they clung to the wharves and struggled to survive in their new environment.

Americans must have expected a substantial increase in Irish immigration as a result of the Great Famine, but they certainly did not anticipate the sudden tidal wave that threatened to engulf them. In 1847, for example—in a single year—the city of Boston, which had been absorbing immigrants at the rate of about four or five thousand a year, was inundated by over thirty-seven thousand new arrivals, most of whom were officially listed as “Irish labourers.” Upwards of one thousand immigrants landed at the port of Boston in a single day—April 10, 1847—and although many of them moved on through the city to find homes in other parts of the state, a sufficient number remained to increase the urban population substantially.

In contrast to other American cities, Boston had never really accepted Irish immigrants, but at least those who had come over during the 1820s and 1830s had been physically robust and sturdy—strong enough to swing the picks and shovels on construction jobs and lug heavy cargo on the docks. And for this reason, they had been tolerated for their contributions to the community’s economic development. Most of the newly arrived “Famine Irish,” however, came ashore pallid and weak, half-starved, disease-ridden, and impoverished,

with no skills at all except a rudimentary knowledge of farming. There was little they could offer to the community in which they found themselves. Perhaps more to the point, there was almost nothing the community could do for them. Boston offered few economic opportunities to those without skills and without tools. At a time when other American cities were developing industrial centers, manufacturing outlets, and railroad concentrations capable of employing large numbers of unskilled workers, Boston's capital investments had long been dispersed into such outlying areas as Waltham, Lowell, and Lawrence, where waterpower sites had been available for textile production. Within the city itself, therefore, there was little call for the abundant supply of cheap Irish labor now at hand. Without the schooling to become clerks, the training to become craftsmen, or the capital to become shopkeepers, the Boston Irish became, as Oscar Handlin expressed it in his classic study *Boston's Immigrants*, "a massive lump in the community, undigested, undigestible." Most men were forced to rely on the meager earnings of their womenfolk—their wives, their sisters, their daughters—working as domestic servants in the hotels and private homes of the city, in order to tide them over until they could scrape up temporary jobs as day laborers sweeping streets, tending horses, cleaning stables, unloading ships, cutting fish, and lugging crates.

In addition to a bleak economic picture, Irish Catholics also confronted the problem of a social climate that was decidedly hostile. At the time the immigrants were fleeing pestilence and famine, Boston was already an old city, with more than two centuries of history and tradition behind it. The city's Brahmin aristocracy was inordinately proud of its distinctive past and was, therefore, fiercely determined to fight against any changes that could possibly threaten its future. Then, too, Boston had retained its distinctively Anglo-Saxon-Protestant character long after other East Coast cities like New York and Philadelphia had become metropolitan centers, and newer western cities like St. Louis and Chicago were absorbing frontiersmen and immigrants alike. The possibility that Irish Catholics, with their alien culture and their detested religion, would ever be welcomed or even admitted into the exclusive ranks of such a long-established and highly self-conscious social system was extremely unlikely.

Because of such attitudes, newcomers who once may have been looked upon merely as nuisances or inconveniences were regarded as menaces to the city and obvious threats to democratic institutions everywhere. "Foreign paupers are rapidly accumulating on our hands," warned Mayor John Prescott

Bigelow in 1850, telling sympathetic taxpayers about the large numbers of “aged, blind, paralytic, and lunatic immigrants who have become public charges on our public charities.” The extent of their drinking was exaggerated, and their inclination for brawling became almost legendary. The vile and congested slums in which they were forced to live were cited as evidence of their essentially lazy character. Native Bostonians were appalled at the unsanitary living conditions of the newcomers and complained that they were turning Massachusetts into a “moral cesspool.” When, in spite of their supposed laziness, they took jobs of the most menial sort, they were accused of taking work away from deserving local Yankees and further denounced for driving down the standard of living. Their Catholic religion was looked upon as a permanent obstacle to social assimilation, and when they began showing a flair for political organization, they were denounced as a danger to the American political system.

In the face of this new and greatly enlarged “Catholic Menace” after the Great Famine of 1847, native-born Americans felt that more effective measures were needed to control what appeared to be a crisis of national proportions. During 1852–1853, a number of local patriotic and “nativist” organizations combined to form the “American Party,” a national political organization designed to protect the United States from the “insidious wiles of foreigners.” The party was highly secret, complete with handshakes and passwords, and was commonly referred to as the “Know-Nothing Party” because its members were pledged not to give out a single word about the organization, its activities, or its membership. Their stock response to any such question was: “I know nothing.” The object of the new party was to keep recent immigrants in an essentially subservient position while the party worked to develop legislation that would put strict controls on further Catholic immigration.

Political power in such East Coast cities as Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore took a sudden swing to the new party. In Massachusetts, the American Party succeeded in electing the governor, all the state officers, the entire state senate, and all but one member of the house of representatives. Once they took office, the members of the Know-Nothing legislature pushed forward a program of “Temperance, Liberty, and Protestantism” in the name of the people of Massachusetts who, according to one house member, were ready to eliminate “Rome, Rum, and Robbery.” In addition to proposing a Twenty-One-Year Law that would have prevented any immigrant from voting until he had been a resident of the commonwealth for twenty-one years, the legislature dissolved all Irish militia companies and confiscated their military



An anti-Catholic cartoon of the early nineteenth century shows how Nativists saw the Catholic hierarchy, here personified by Paul Cullen, archbishop of Armagh, moving aggressively across the Atlantic Ocean from the various counties in southern Ireland. Fearing a papal conspiracy to establish the power of the Catholic Church in the United States, Protestants organized various political organizations to defend the nation against the inroads of foreigners.

equipment. The legislature also made the reading of the Protestant version of the Bible (the King James version) compulsory in all public schools and deprived diocesan officials of all control over church property. In February 1855, a joint committee of the state legislature was formed to inquire into "certain practices" alleged to be taking place in nunneries and in Catholic schools. This "Nunnery Committee" undertook a series of visitations at several Catholic schools with such insensitivity and heavy-footed boorishness, however, that the legislature was quickly forced to dissolve it.

So great was the power of the American Party as it swept through all the other states of the Union that by 1856 it was preparing to take over the conventions, make a victorious sweep of the national elections, and put a Know-Nothing president in the White House. But the triumph of the American Party, although swift and impressive, was remarkably short-lived. During the spring of 1856, the violence in the Kansas Territory, the news of John Brown's bloody raid, and the savage beating of Senator Charles Sumner were enough to convince most Americans that slavery was the overriding issue of the day. There was little chance that something as nebulous and contrived as a "Catholic Menace" would distract the nation's attention from the problem of slavery, the reality of national expansion, and the growing crisis of the Union. The fact that the Know-Nothings' presidential candidate, Millard Fillmore, received the electoral votes of only a single state (Maryland) was clear evidence that its moment of glory had passed. Bigotry had proved a poor cement for the foundation of a truly national political organization.

Despite its collapse, the Know-Nothing movement was a dramatic and tangible demonstration of the fear with which nativists, in Boston and in other parts of the country, regarded the influx of immigrants and the lengths to which many nativists would go to keep outsiders in their place. By 1850, there were already some 35,000 persons of Irish extraction living in Boston, and five years later that number had grown to more than 50,000. Considering the fact that the city's total population in 1855 was about 160,000, this meant that even before the outbreak of the Civil War the Irish already constituted almost one-third of Boston's population—clearly a force to be reckoned with.

For the time being, however, the nation was caught up in the incredible events that followed the election of Abraham Lincoln in November 1860. For a brief period of time, the Civil War neutralized the tensions between the Yankee and the Celt, as the problem of controlling the immigrant became secondary to the task of saving the Union. For the first time, immigrants had an opportunity

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to demonstrate their loyalty to their adopted country. "We Catholics have only one course to adopt, only one line to follow," stated the local Irish newspaper, *The Pilot*, on January 12, 1861. "Stand by the Union; fight for the Union; die by the Union." Almost without exception, the Irish came out in support of the Lincoln administration, although they made it clear that they were willing to fight to save the Union but not to free the slaves. Many joined the all-Irish 9th Regiment and went off to the battlefields, where their green banners were always in the forefront of the fighting.

The loyalty demonstrated by the Irish during the Civil War caused native Bostonians to relax their defensive posture for a time and show a greater degree of tolerance and understanding. In 1861, for example, Harvard College conferred an honorary doctor of divinity degree upon John Bernard Fitzpatrick, the Catholic bishop of Boston, and a short time later the City Hospital announced that patients could be attended by a clergyman of their own choosing. While it lasted, the Civil War seemed to have provided a kind of watershed in relations between native Bostonians and the immigrants, with a sense on the part of local Bostonians that the immigrant flood had reached its highest level and would gradually recede once the war was over. It was hoped that future generations of Irish Catholics would quietly withdraw into the background, become orderly and obedient citizens, and leave the running of the city of Boston to those old and established families who had done it so well in the past.

8

Clash of Cultures

AFTER the Civil War, the future seemed much more promising for the members of the city's Irish community. For one thing, the war provided a sudden and unexpected opportunity for Irish Catholics to gain a measure of acceptance that would have seemed unthinkable only a few years earlier, when they had been regarded as a barbarous and totally unreliable people who could never be assimilated into the American way of life.

With the Rebel attack on Fort Sumter, however, Boston's large Irish-Catholic population became an invaluable human resource that had to be brought to bear on the struggle at hand. The loyalty to the Union that the Irish community displayed and the gallantry with which they fought on the battlefields did much to erase, or at least greatly reduce, the troublesome old questions about their ability to become loyal and responsible Americans. The honorary degree awarded to the Catholic bishop by Harvard College as a gesture of civic friendship was soon followed by similar concessions. Local school committees modified the requirements of Bible reading and the recitation of Protestant prayers; Catholic priests were allowed to visit patients in the Boston City Hospital and perform religious rites; and the law requiring a two-year waiting period for naturalization was repealed.

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The Civil War also marked a significant transition in the depressed economic circumstances of the Boston Irish. By joining the Union Army, by replacing a local conscript and getting a generous bonus, or by gaining employment in nearby armories, factories, or shipyards, many Irishmen had their first real opportunity to make a little money and gain more acceptance in a community that had hitherto regarded them as little more than lazy loafers.

Ambitious construction projects such as laying out the South End, building the new City Hall, putting up the City Hospital, hauling in the gravel, and filling in the Back Bay furnished additional employment for Irish laborers. The work was hard and the hours long, but this combination of war work and city construction gave many Irish workers their first real opportunity to bring home a day's pay on a regular basis. With this first step up on the rung of economic success, the Irish began moving out of the old, congested waterfront sections of downtown Boston into such nearby neighborhoods as Charlestown, South Boston, East Boston, and Dorchester. Then, in the late 1860s and early 1870s, using new forms of transportation such as the horse-drawn streetcar, many were able to move out into more suburban neighborhoods such as Roxbury, Brighton, and West Roxbury, as Sam Bass Warner, Jr., showed in his study entitled *Streetcar Suburbs*. With immigrant families creating whole new residential neighborhoods, new schools, churches, hospitals, and businesses had to be constructed. Police and fire departments had to be organized, roads and streets paved, water mains and sewer lines constructed, and municipal services developed, all of which not only accommodated the needs of new families, but also provided full-time jobs for many able-bodied Irish-American workers.

Along with these municipal services, a series of new public utilities were incorporated during the 1880s—the New England Telephone and Telegraph Company, the Edison Electric Illuminating Company, the Massachusetts Electric Company, the Boston Consolidated Gas Company—to bring in the gas, the electricity, and the telephone lines needed to service the new communities. These new public utility companies, together with a vast array of municipal service projects, offered badly needed employment on a scale never before seen in Boston. These were new opportunities that did not take jobs away from native-born Bostonians, and for which Irish Americans considered themselves eminently qualified. In large numbers they rushed to fill the enormous labor vacuum. At first, of course, most of them worked at the more menial jobs working as ditch diggers, hod carriers, pile drivers, cement mixers, and

common laborers. But those with shrewder minds, quicker reflexes, or better political connections soon became successful public-works contractors, owners of trucking companies, managers of construction corporations, or real estate investors.

Despite their improved social status and their better economic standing during the postwar period, there were few signs that the Boston Irish would be able to significantly improve their political influence. Indeed, for a time it was questionable whether Democrats in general could continue to exist as a bona fide political party after 1865. The Republican party—as the party of Abraham Lincoln, the advocate of emancipation, and the architect of victory—was riding high at the end of the war. The Democrats, by contrast, were viewed as the supporters of Jefferson Davis, the defenders of slavery, and the champions of states' rights. In the full flush of postwar nationalism, it was difficult for anyone to admit to being a card-carrying Democrat.

This was discouraging to the Irish, who had been loyal supporters of the Democratic party since the days of Jefferson and Jackson although, despite their growing numbers, they had been unable to move into the higher echelons of party influence. Before the Civil War, there had never been a single Irishman on Boston's eight-man Board of Aldermen, and only one man with an Irish name (Edward Hennesy) was recorded on the city's forty-eight-man Common Council. The fire department was clearly reserved exclusively for "American" candidates, and the only Irishman to become a member of the city's police department (Barney McGinniskin) lasted only one year on the force. In the postwar surge of patriotic solidarity, there seemed little indication that things would get any better.

There were a number of influential Yankee Democrats, too, who were equally disheartened at the dismal prospects for their party. Boston still had a solid core of old-time lawyers, bankers, merchants, and shippers who had seen their earlier influence in the Federalist and Whig parties eclipsed by the antislavery Republicans. Their numbers had been augmented by younger, native-born, Harvard-educated Brahmins like Nathaniel S. Shurtleff, a prominent physician; Frederic Octavius Prince, class poet at Harvard, active in law and Democratic politics; Nathan Matthews, Jr., lecturer in government at Harvard; and Josiah Quincy, a dedicated Democrat and last in Boston's long line of famous Quincys. They saw themselves as providing a necessary bulwark against the radical social experiments of Republican politicians who were engaging in an unholy alliance with corrupt businessmen. They looked to the traditions of the Democratic

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party to restore the old-fashioned virtues of personal integrity and self-reliance by emphasizing states' rights, low taxes, limited expenditures, and restricted powers for the federal government.

In order to get the kind of numbers they needed to make any kind of political impact during the postwar era, Yankee Democrats would have to form alliances with the loyal Irish stalwarts who, for more than three decades, had made up the silent rank and file of the Democratic party. The Irish, meanwhile, saw the advantages of such an unlikely coalition and moved quickly to take a leadership role in reestablishing the Democratic party as a vital force in the city's political structure. A major figure in this undertaking was a young Irishman named Patrick Collins, who had emigrated to America with his mother after his father had died at the height of the Great Famine. Living in Chelsea in the midst of the Know-Nothing turmoil, the Collins family moved to Chicago for two years, where young Patrick worked in the fields and the coal mines before returning to Boston, where he worked as an upholsterer's apprentice. In 1867, Collins joined the local Democratic party and soon became known for his abilities as a public speaker. He won election to the state legislature, where he used his energies to remove many of the restriction against Catholics in various penal and charitable institutions.*

On August 18, 1868, while serving as one of only nineteen Democrats in the state legislature, Collins held a meeting with a number of young Irish political colleagues at Boston's Parker House. Included in the group were Thomas Gargan, a lawyer who had served in the Civil War; Michael Cunliffe, a young immigrant who had gone into banking and land development; and Patrick Maguire, who had moved from the printing business into real estate. The Parker House meeting was the start of the Young Men's Democratic Club, which chose twenty-five-year-old Collins as its first president and proceeded to hold weekly meetings to promote voter registration and plan campaign strategy. On October 20, 1868, the club held a mammoth rally at Faneuil Hall, with Collins presiding at a gathering that included such prominent Brahmin Democrats as John Quincy Adams, Jr., Reuben Noble, William Gaston, and Edward Avery—public evidence of the new coalition between the Yankees and the Celts. Collins announced that the Democrats of Massachusetts were now

* While serving in the state legislature, Collins attended Harvard Law School, from which he received a law degree in 1871. He passed the Massachusetts bar examination the same year and built up a lucrative law practice in the city.

“organized and at work” and called upon all young men to join in a “ballot revolution” to rescue the state from Republican control.

During the presidential election of 1872, Collins and the Democrats were joined by local Liberal Republicans who had become so disgusted with the corruption of the Grant administration that they agreed to support the Democratic candidate, Horace Greeley. Although Greeley was soundly defeated by the Grant Republicans, the state’s new Democratic coalition acquired new visibility and respect. Hoping to organize the power of the Irish on a statewide basis, in 1874 Collins organized a Democratic City Committee and worked to get Democrat Samuel J. Tilden of New York into the White House in 1876. Once again, however, the Democrats went down to defeat as Republican Rutherford B. Hayes of Ohio beat Tilden in a close and bitterly contested victory.

Discouraged but still hopeful, Collins, Gargan, Cunniff, and the others held their statewide Brahmin-Irish coalition together with the continued support of Josiah Abbott, Frederic O. Prince, and Leverett Saltonstall. In 1881, Collins himself won a seat in the U.S. Congress and worked for the candidacy of Grover Cleveland, who won the presidency in November 1884—the first Democrat to occupy the White House in twenty-eight years.

As Collins moved into national affairs in Washington, political leadership in the city of Boston was taken over by Patrick J. Maguire, an Irish immigrant who spent his youth in the printing business until he went into real estate at the age of twenty-seven. By 1882, he had become successful enough to establish a local Irish newspaper called *The Republic*, which was designed to champion “all things Irish” and to attack “all things Republican.” With their substantial growth in numbers and their extraordinary movement into the neighborhoods in the course of a single generation, the Boston Irish now formed a larger political constituency than ever before. The population increase meant that old wards would have to be subdivided; the addition of new land meant that entirely new wards had to be created. In 1854, there had been only twelve wards in the city; the number increased to twenty-four by 1875 and then to twenty-five in 1876. With his keen political sense, and through his membership on the Democratic City Committee, Patrick Maguire decided that the time had come to elect an Irish mayor and picked a successful, self-made businessman named Hugh O’Brien as his candidate. O’Brien had come from Ireland in 1832, when he was five years old, and worked at the printer’s trade until he established his *Shipping and Commercial List*, an invaluable source of financial information for the city’s merchants. He also served seven years on the Board of Aldermen, where he

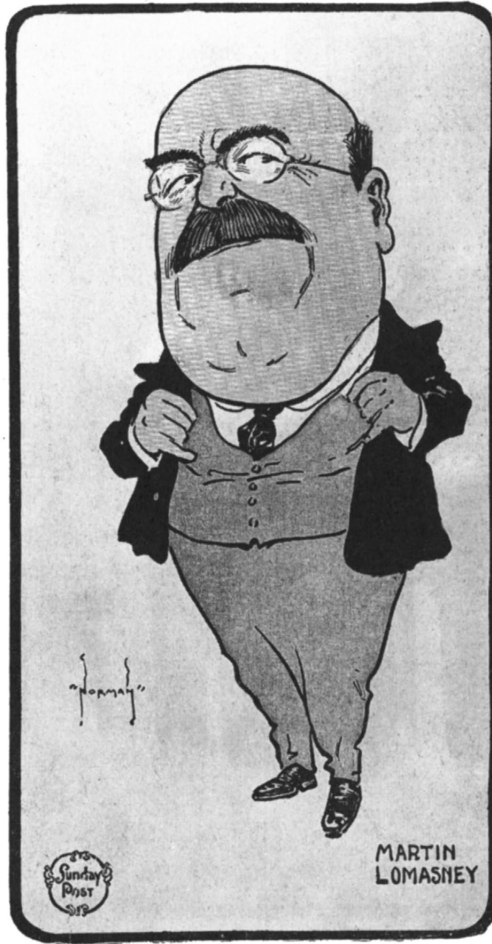
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distinguished himself by what the *Boston Advertiser* called his “conscientious hard work.” The Democratic City Committee endorsed Hugh O’Brien for the office of mayor, Maguire’s *Republic* supported his candidacy, and in December 1884 the City of Boston elected its first Irish-born, Roman Catholic mayor. Nearly two decades of effort to create a citywide Democratic party that would move the Irish into political power had finally produced tangible results.

To many native Bostonians, Hugh O’Brien came as something of a pleasant surprise. Businesslike, sober, and cautious, he displayed none of the disturbing characteristics Yankees usually associated with immigrants from Ireland. He dressed appropriately, spoke correctly, was cordial to the Brahmins, and was deferential to the traditions of the city they personified. Indeed, O’Brien proved such a popular and efficient executive that he was elected to four consecutive terms as mayor. O’Brien, like Patrick Collins, was perceived to be an Irishman of the “better sort,” an “acceptable” Irishman, the kind of Irishman Yankees would seek out and encourage to eventually become leaders of the city.

But these “better sort” of conciliatory Irishmen were few and far between as far as most Yankees were concerned, based on the Yankee perception of the way in which so many of the “other sort,” the confrontational kind, took over control of their own local districts for selfish purposes. As the number of Irish immigrants increased during the 1870s, first in the downtown wards of the West End, the North End, and the South End, and later in the neighborhoods of Charlestown, South Boston, Dorchester, and Roxbury, a number of local politicians emerged who set themselves up as “bosses” of their particular districts. Immigrants, or the sons of immigrants, they had usually worked their way up from jobs (grocers, bartenders, funeral directors) that enabled them to meet a wide variety of people and hone their talents at influence and persuasion. As they elbowed out their political rivals, these bosses solidified their power through a political system that soon became an accepted pattern throughout the city. Once a local boss took over, his ward was divided into precincts, each with a captain in charge. Each captain supervised perhaps a dozen lieutenants who, in turn, supervised workers assigned to specific streets. Comparing census lists with voting lists, these workers were expected to check each house on the street to make sure that every party member voted in every election. Shrewd, ambitious, and manipulative, the bosses acquired a reputation for turning out the votes of “their people” with machinelike precision.

In the West End’s Ward 8, Martin Lomasney, known to his followers as “the Mahatma,” exercised extraordinary influence. He arrived early every morning,



The “massive dome,” the dark mustache, the gold-rimmed spectacles, and the prominent jaw of Martin Lomasney did not escape the clever pen of “Norman,” the cartoonist of the *Boston Post*. Legendary boss of the West End’s Ward 8, Lomasney was known as “the Mahatma” as he worked day and night for the interests of the people in his district. *Courtesy of the Bostonian Society/Old State House.*

365 days a year, at his headquarters at the Hendricks Club, where he cared for the people in his ward in all phases of their lives, relieving thousands, as he liked to put it, of “the inquisitorial terrors of organized charity.” To the people of the West End, wrote Doris Kearns Goodwin, “he was a god.” In the nearby North End (Ward 6), an energetic young man named John F. Fitzgerald had risen to

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a position similar to that of Lomasney. A bright son of immigrant parents, he had been forced to leave college when his father died and quickly moved into the exciting world of politics. When the local ward boss died unexpectedly, it was the twenty-nine-year-old Fitzgerald who took his place as the boss of the North End. Fitzgerald's counterpart across the harbor in East Boston was Patrick J. Kennedy, who had also left school to help his widowed mother run the family grocery store. By the time he was thirty, Kennedy had not only acquired his own liquor-importing business, but was also regarded as the political boss of East Boston.* In Charlestown, Joe Corbett was the kingpin; in Dorchester's sprawling Ward 20, Joseph O'Connell was the acknowledged political leader; "Smiling Jim" Donovan controlled the immigrants moving into the tenements and boardinghouses of the South End's Ward 9; and P. J. ("Pea Jacket") Maguire (not to be confused with Patrick J. Maguire) ruled Roxbury's Ward 17 until he was ousted by a young, up-and-coming politician named James Michael Curley. When they arrived in America, the Irish had found most avenues for rapid economic advancement closed to them, especially in a city like Boston whose financial establishment was so rigidly controlled by family ties and corporate boards. Politics, therefore, provided one of the few ready-made roads to power and success for those who were quick enough, shrewd enough, and tough enough to seize the opportunity.

But for many an Irish boss, politics was not merely a means for personal advancement. It was also an invaluable opportunity to provide effective assistance to his own people at a time when they could not obtain what they needed from any other source. Their needs were largely basic—food and clothing, dentures and eyeglasses, jobs and pardons, medical care and legal advice—but mostly unattainable at that time; political support of their ward boss brought assurance that he would supply those needs. As Martin Lomasney once philosophized: "The great mass of people are interested in only three things—food, clothing, and shelter. A politician in a district such as mine sees to it that his people get these things. If he does, then he doesn't have to worry about their loyalty and support." It was as simple as that. Power and patronage went hand in hand in the Irish neighborhoods and pointed up the fact that the basic political philosophy of the Irish differed substantially from that of the old Yankees.

* Patrick Kennedy's son, Joseph, would later marry John Fitzgerald's daughter, Rose. Joe and Rose would raise a large family that would eventually produce a son, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the first Irish-Catholic president of the United States.

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Carrying out the requisite functions of a typical Irish ward boss, John F. Fitzgerald personally hands out Christmas turkeys and groceries to his loyal constituents in the North End while supplying dolls, blackboards, and toys for their children. The political survival of a ward boss depended on his ability to provide for the basic needs of the people in his particular district. *Courtesy of The John F. Kennedy Library.*

For generations, the Yankees and the Brahmins had held fast to a strain of political thinking that the historian John William Ward once labeled “rational politics.” This is an essentially bureaucratic view of politics that conceives of government as establishing the rule of law for the community as a whole in a rational and equitable manner. Under this system, political leaders of integrity and experience are chosen to resist selfish interests and individual concerns so that they can govern for the “public interest” and the “common weal.” By contrast, the immigrant strain of political thinking that Ward calls “ethnic politics” emphasizes family and friendship, the personal and the individual, rather than the general or the universal. Newly arrived immigrants took

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it for granted that the major function of government was to look to the interests of individuals and their families—to provide them with safety and sanctuary, furnish them with the basic necessities of life, and offer them practical opportunities for social and economic advancement. After all, what was government for, if not to help people in this way? “I think that there’s got to be in every ward somebody that any bloke can come to—no matter what he’s done—and get help,” Martin Lomasney is reported to have told the writer and social critic Lincoln Steffens. “Help, you understand; none of your law and justice, but help.”

Seen in the light of rising Irish-Catholic political power, both in the wards as well as throughout the city, prospects for Yankee Protestants in Boston were poor—especially as demographics predicted an even more dismal future. “New England Protestants will do well to remember that the Catholic population gains on them every year, as well by natural increase as by emigration,” observed Francis Parkman from his Beacon Street home. He bemoaned the fact that the size of Yankee families had “dwindled in numbers generation after generation through [the nineteenth] century.” Clearly, the prospect of having their traditional Puritan town, their cherished “City upon a Hill,” taken over by hordes of Irish Catholics, with no appreciation of the city’s distinctive past or of the outstanding virtues of its distinguished families, was depressing enough for any Boston Brahmin.

Even worse, however, was the fact that at almost the very moment that the Irish were electing their own mayor and moving into other positions of political power, a whole new wave of immigration was bringing in people from different parts of Europe who had even less in common with the traditions of Boston and, as far as most native Bostonians were concerned, practically nothing to contribute to the city’s future.

For the greater part of the nineteenth century, most immigrants arriving in America had come from northern and western Europe—from the British Isles, the northern parts of France and Germany, and various Scandinavian countries. By the 1880s, however, the national character of immigration had begun to change dramatically, and by the 1890s most immigrants were coming from the countries of southern and eastern Europe—Italy, Austria-Hungary, Greece, and the various Balkan countries, as well as Poland, Lithuania, and Russia. Fleeing from high taxes, low wages, drought, famine, political oppression, religious persecution, and military conscription, the members of this “new immigration” were no longer the easily assimilable groups whose cultural traditions and

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political institutions were similar to those of the United States. But these people, too, had been drawn by America's celebrated image as a nation of freedom and a land of opportunity, and they were determined to build for themselves a new and more hopeful future. Together with other northeastern states such as New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, Massachusetts also received its share of the new European immigrants. In the decade between 1900 and 1910, over 150,000 Italians entered the Bay State, along with some 80,000 Poles and nearly 25,000 Lithuanians. Most of these newcomers headed for major urban centers like Boston, Lowell, Lawrence, and Brockton in search of jobs and a place to call home.

The flood of Italian immigrants came, in great measure, because of their desperate desire to escape the natural disasters that ruined their lands and destroyed their lives. In the southern parts of Italy, particularly, there was a drastic shortage of rain, and every year the lands, without access to large rivers and without effective systems of irrigation, were plagued by drought. Generations of chopping down forests on the slopes of the mountains made those slopes so barren that when it did rain, landslides came down to ruin the farms and build up the marshes where mosquitoes flourished. In Sicily, in the provinces around Naples, and in the recesses of the Po Valley, thousands of *braccianti* (landless men) wandered from farm to farm looking for work, weakened by malaria and other debilitating diseases.

In 1880, an estimated 109,000 Italians left their homes and their farms. By 1881, the average number of emigrants was up to 154,000; by 1886 it had reached 222,000. By the mid-1880s, more than half were going to America, many of them lured by North American industrialists and shipping concerns who found it profitable to import cheap, unskilled labor. In the years that followed, Italian men, often referred to as "birds of passage," traveled back and forth across the Atlantic, bringing home anywhere from \$4 million to \$30 million a year to their families in Italy, and then returning to make more money at their jobs in America. Only a fifth of the more than 300,000 Italians migrating to America in the 1880s were women. After the turn of the century, however, the number of females increased, the men became permanent residents, and families grew rapidly on this side of the Atlantic.

The vast majority of Italian immigrants to Boston arrived during the late 1880s and 1890s. At first they congregated along the waterfront of Boston's North End, where the Italian population grew from one thousand in 1880 to seven thousand in 1895—almost a thousand more Italians in the North End

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New sights and sounds accompanied the arrival of the wave of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe as they brought their food and their clothing, their habits and their customs, from the Old World to the shores of the New World. Here a hurdy-gurdy man turns the handle of his instrument and plays his tunes for an appreciative audience of young newcomers in Boston's North End. *Courtesy of the Bostonian Society/Old State House.*

that year than Irish. Gradually they moved into East Boston as well as other neighborhoods that had once been predominantly Irish. Before long, Italians became an important part of all Boston neighborhoods, working as barbers, and hairdressers, cobblers, and leather workers, and also operating nearly all the fruit stores and groceries in the districts. Invariably they were hailed familiarly as “Mickey,” “Sully,” and “Pat” by the Irish residents who were never able to pronounce names like Minichiello, Solimini, or Pasqualucci.

Mostly poor and illiterate, the Italians depended on their *paesani* (friends from the same village in Italy) to help them get settled, and they sought out a *padrone* (a labor contractor) to find them their first jobs—for a fee, of course.

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Because most of them were unskilled workers, the jobs available to them were decidedly limited. They worked on the docks, in the granite quarries, and on the railroads, or they left the city in large groups early each morning to build a sewer system in Brockton or Beverly, or to pour concrete for the sidewalk construction in Arlington and Belmont. Almost all single Italian women worked, and nearly a quarter of all married women worked at least part-time in some local garment factory or confectionery works.

Although the Italians were mostly Catholic, as were the Irish, they preferred to attend their own churches where they could hear Italian priests give sermons in their own language. St. Leonard's Church was founded in the North End in 1873, and in 1888 the Sacred Heart Church was established for the benefit of the newcomers. Out of these churches came a host of benevolent societies, schools, and social clubs. One of the customary responsibilities of these societies was to honor their patron saint with a yearly festival. In 1903, for example, former villagers from San Sossio Baronia began celebrating the feast of *La Madonna delle Grazie*; Sicilian fishermen, on the other hand, honored *La Madonna de Soccorso* each year for her help in protecting the men at sea. Similar festivals for St. Joseph, St. Anthony, St. Rocco, and many other favorite saints were always a colorful part of the North End's religious and social life.

The structure of the North End itself gradually reflected the villages, the provinces, and the regions of these parts of southern Italy from which these people had come. As William De Marco has shown in *Ethnics and Enclaves*, the North End was divided—almost on a street-by-street basis—into separate enclaves of Avilaneses, Calabrese, and Abruzzese; Neapolitans and Sicilians; and a small group of Genoese from Northern Italy. Each group had its own dialect; its own customs, foods, and patron saints; and its own way of following “*la via vecchia*”—the old way of life. Residents not only defined themselves as living “on North Street,” or “near St. Mary’s,” or “from lower Prince Street,” but they also identified the part of Italy from which their family had come, the church they attended, the societies to which they belonged, and the occupation they pursued.

Another immigrant group that arrived in large numbers during the 1880s and 1890s was the Jews, whose numbers had reached four thousand by 1890 but soared to forty thousand by 1910. Before the Civil War, Boston had only a small Jewish population that had grown from less than forty in 1840 to about a thousand by 1860. The majority of these early Jews were more Polish than German in origin, the majority coming from the Polish region of Posen. Within

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the first synagogue, Ohabei Shalom, on Warrenton Street in the South End, the members followed the Polish-Jewish rite known as *Minhag Polin*. The minority that preferred the German rite, known as *Minhag Ashkenaz*, broke away in 1853 and established what was later called Temple Israel.

It was during the 1880s and 1890s, however, that Jews began to arrive in much greater numbers, coming from the Eastern European ghettos of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia, escaping the vicious pogroms that destroyed their homes, wrecked their businesses, and threatened their lives. In the 1880s, an average of twenty thousand Jews left Russia each year; during the 1890s, the figure rose to forty thousand a year. Sometimes, as with the Italians, the men came first, made a little money, and later brought over their wives and children. The newcomers would come ashore with little more than the clothes on their backs, perhaps a little money, and a cloth bag containing two candlesticks, a samovar, and some feather pillows. "When we arrived in Boston," wrote Anne Goldberg of Brighton, "I remember being taken from a boat to Scollay Square in a surrey. As we came along Hanover Street, I saw the Star Theater and the Olympia. It was Christmas time, and their signs lit up the sky. To a little girl from a village in Poland, this was a fairyland." Into the North End they moved, along with the Italians who were arriving at the same time, crowding in on the remnants of the equally poor Irish who still lived along the waterfront.

At first, the Jews congregated in a small triangular section of the North End, bounded by Hanover, Endicott, and Prince Streets. "It resembled a Russian fair," one visitor recalled. "Men, women, and children in multi-colored garb jostled each other on sidewalk and street. Pushcarts loaded with fruit and vegetables, fish and crabs, and edibles of every description pre-empted the sidewalk, the gutters, and most of the street." As their numbers increased, many of the Jews moved into East Boston, the South End, and Roxbury, and then across the harbor on a three-cent ferry boat ride to the neighboring city of Chelsea. This was where the family of little Mary Antin first settled when they came over from Russia in the early 1890s. Later they moved to the South End, not far from Dover Street, where there was little except "meals in the kitchen and beds in the dark." Seeing how their neighbors gave their children "boundless liberty," Mary later wrote in her autobiography, *The Promised Land*, her parents turned their children loose, "never doubting but that the American way was the best way."

As time went on, Jews moved into the West End in such impressive numbers, and formed such a significant part of that congested neighborhood, that Martin Lomasney would not, and could not, ignore them. "When our

boat landed in East Boston, we were met by a welcoming committee,” recalled Edgar Grossman, founder of the Massachusetts Envelope Company. “They were shouting: ‘Welcome to America. The Democratic Party welcomes you to America. Martin Lomasney welcomes you to Boston.’” The Jews quickly became an integral part of the political constituency of the West End. Within their tightknit community, they established health clinics, orphanages, sewing circles, lending libraries, free-loan societies, labor groups, and even a baseball team. In 1910, when the Jewish population had swelled to eighty thousand, Boston boasted seven Yiddish-language newspapers, while an active Yiddish theater flourished in the vicinity of Dover and Washington Streets in the South End.

Since many of them had come from rural villages and small towns in Eastern Europe, many Jews turned to peddling or operating small shops in order to make a living. One elderly Jewish woman recalled that “Everyone who came to Boston would take a basket.” The immigrants would fill these baskets with bits of inexpensive merchandise from a store that extended them credit. They would then set out—if they were lucky, with a horse and cart—to sell their goods in a neighborhood that had not yet been visited by many peddlers. Those newcomers who were not yet able to speak English had been taught to say: “Look in the basket.” Those Jews who did not work in trade or sales looked for jobs in other lines of work. Some used the streetcar to travel to Boston’s suburbs, where they found work as rag men, junk dealers, shoemakers, tailors, or garment workers. A number of Jews drove horse-drawn cabs in many parts of the city; others moved around, taking whatever jobs they could find. It was hard, but for most of them it was far better than what they had left behind in the ghettos of Eastern Europe. “It was a beautiful time for the Jews,” insisted Miriam Rogers, whose parents arrived in the West End in 1906. “Poverty? There’s no doubt. But you didn’t see anybody starving. The mothers did what they had to do to feed their children. It was just great!”

Immigrants from Poland were another sizable group to come to America during the 1880s and 1890s, and by the turn of the century there were, by some estimates, approximately ten thousand people from Poland already located in the Boston area. Most of them settled near the boundary line that separated South Boston and Dorchester, just off Andrew Square. It was in this area that they established a site for a national church, and in November 1894 a wooden church was dedicated to Our Lady of Czestochowa. The Polish population in the area continued to grow and quickly became a small but active part of

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The closing years of the nineteenth century brought a new flood of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe to Boston and other East Coast cities. Newcomers from Italy settled into the North End and across the harbor in East Boston; Jewish peddlers sold fruit from their pushcarts in the West End; and everywhere signs of European influence could be seen throughout the city. *Courtesy of the Bostonian Society/Old State House.*

the peninsula district. At about the same time, some one thousand Lithuanian immigrants arrived in Boston, and most of them also made their homes in South Boston. Reflecting the strong national impulse of the 1880s that called upon Lithuanians everywhere to preserve their own traditional ways and customs, the newcomers settled in the lower end of the South Boston peninsula, along C and D Streets, directly across town from where the Polish immigrants had settled.

The continent of Asia was also represented in the “new immigration” that brought peoples to Boston from unfamiliar parts of the world. For almost a century, Boston had maintained commercial relations with the Chinese

mainland, carrying on a valuable China trade that contributed to the personal fortunes of many local merchants. It was not until the 1890s, however, that the city had its first permanent Chinese community. During the 1850s and 1860s, many Chinese had come to the West Coast of the United States, where they served as a source of cheap labor, first during the gold rush and later during the building of the transcontinental railroad tracks. Once the tracks were completed, jobless laborers began drifting to the big cities of the East Coast. In 1875, a group of Chinese was brought in to break a strike at a shoe factory in North Adams. After the strike was settled, the workers continued on to the Boston area in search of jobs. Arriving at the South Station, they settled in a low-rent area at the edge of the downtown business district known as the South Cove. By 1890, the whole South Cove area was clearly established as a settlement of some two hundred Chinese residents, in a neighborhood that was soon called Chinatown.

Many old-time Yankees of Boston, as the historian Barbara Solomon perceptively observed in *Ancestors and Immigrants*, were at a complete loss to comprehend the magnitude of this sudden and completely unexpected inundation of strange foreigners into their ancient and honorable city. The Irish Catholics who had arrived half a century earlier had been bad enough, but at least they had been able to speak English and usually had some acquaintance with basic Anglo-Saxon social customs and political traditions. But these *new* people—swarthy Italians, black-bearded Jews, a motley collection of Poles, Lithuanians, Greeks, and Chinese—spoke a babel of tongues, followed entirely different social customs, and lacked any firsthand experience with the democratic process. Things had reached a point, Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes told a friend, where a New Englander felt much more at home “among his own people” in London, England, than “in one of our seaboard cities.”

Those Brahmins who had always hoped that they could gradually absorb or “acculturate” the immigrants into the Boston way of life began to see the hopelessness of the situation. The birth rate of the immigrants was continuing to rise, too many new immigrants were still coming into the city each year, and there were already disturbing signs that the newcomers would soon dominate the entire city. The announcement in 1880 by the Catholic archbishop, John Williams, that there would be a separate parochial school system for Catholic boys and girls came as an additional blow. The Yankees had always counted on the public school system as a way to bridge the gap between the “old” and the “new,” to unify the various races and nationalities, to serve as what Stanley K.

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Schultz has called a “culture factory” by which immigrants could be gradually absorbed into the Boston culture. Now they faced the prospect of having future generations of young Catholics growing up beyond their supervision, guidance, and control.

Some Brahmins reacted to these alarming developments the way some old-time Federalists had done in the early 1800s when the radical Jeffersonian Democrats had come to power. They simply threw up their hands in despair, withdrew completely from active political involvement, and moved out of the city to seek the more rustic atmosphere of such places as Dover, Gloucester, Marblehead, and Prides Crossing.

There were others, however, who felt that drastic measures were necessary to save Boston from being overrun by mobs of ignorant and inferior foreigners. The only effective solution, they believed, was to cut off all further immigration altogether, taking especially strict measures to prevent the admission of any more undesirable elements from southern and eastern Europe. In 1894, three young Brahmins—Charles Warren, Robert DeCourcy Ward, and Prescott Farnsworth Hall, all recent Harvard graduates, members of old Boston families, and terrified by the prospects of continued immigration—founded the Immigration Restriction League of Boston. Their movement attracted immediate encouragement and support from many reform-minded Bostonians, and before long they could boast of having such influential persons as Henry Lee, Robert Treat Paine, Henry Parkman, and Leverett Saltonstall as vice-presidents in their organization. The League acquired an important ally when Henry Cabot Lodge, then only forty-four years of age, added his voice to the cause of immigration restriction. As a congressman, he had already made his views known when he introduced a bill calling for a literacy test, designed to exclude members of those races whom he considered “most alien to the body of the American people.” There was a limit, he said, to the capacity of any race to assimilate an “inferior race,” and when you begin to bring in, in unlimited numbers, people of “alien or lower races of less social efficiency and less moral force,” you are running the most frightful risk that a people can run. “The lowering of a great race,” concluded Senator Lodge, “means not only its decline, but that of civilization.”*

* The Immigration Restriction League continued to function actively until World War I. In the aftermath of anti-foreign sentiments during the 1920s, federal legislation established restrictive quotas that accomplished most of the League’s objectives.

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Despite the cries of alarm and the prophecies of doom, there were still Bostonians who felt it necessary to maintain the high standards of taste and excellence they had always associated with Boston leadership. In the midst of all this demographic change, they dutifully worked to extend the cultural benefits of “old” Boston into the more recently constructed sections of the “new” parts of the city, which had been created out of filled land. From the fashionable environs of the Back Bay, through the Copley Square district, down Huntington Avenue westward toward Brookline, Bostonians became extraordinarily active in creating new architectural structures and cultural institutions for the aesthetic enrichment of the city and its people.

In 1871, when the Brattle Square Unitarian Church sold its old colonial meetinghouse in favor of a new Romanesque church, designed by Henry Hobson Richardson, at the corner of Commonwealth Avenue and Clarendon Street, it set the tone for a remarkable series of architectural accomplishments west of Beacon Hill. The following year, the exotically ornate Museum of Fine Arts went up in Copley Square, just about the same time that a disastrous fire practically wiped out the city’s entire downtown business district. On the evening of November 9, 1872, fire broke out in a building on the corner of Summer and Kingston Streets, not far from where the South Station would later be located. In a matter of minutes, both sides of Summer Street were ablaze as the fire roared through the canyon of five- and seven-story granite buildings, and then swung east down Otis, Arch, and Devonshire Streets, shooting sparks, brands, and hot cinders in all directions. While one part of the conflagration fanned northeast up Milk Street toward Washington Street, another part raced south through Federal and High Streets toward the waterfront. By the time the catastrophe was over the following day, the Great Fire of 1872 had gutted sixty-five acres of Boston’s business and commercial district, destroying property valued at some \$75 million. Most of the entire downtown area had to be rebuilt and modernized, while the city’s fire department was reorganized to make it professional and efficient.

In the meantime, the Great Fire of 1872 helped finalize the decision by a number of churches, public institutions, and commercial establishments to move out of the old part of town and take up residence in the new Back Bay area. Members of Trinity Church, for example, the Episcopal parish of the colonial South End, moved from their Summer Street location to the Back Bay and purchased a lot on the east side of what would become Copley Square. In 1877, work was finally completed on Richardson’s famous Trinity Church,

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a massive masonry structure, designed in the French Romanesque style, that dominated most of the east end of Copley Square. The Boston Public Library, located in downtown Boston on Boylston Street since 1858, also moved to the Back Bay, and in 1880, plans were begun for the construction of the magnificent new library. A handsome Renaissance-style building was designed by the firm of McKim, Mead, and White, and was ready for occupancy in 1895. The Old South Church also moved at that time from its original location at the corner of Washington and Milk Streets to the Back Bay. The New Old South Church, on the corner of Boylston and Dartmouth Streets, directly across from the new public library, was dedicated in 1875. Designed in a North Italian Gothic style, the new church featured a striking campanile that still dominates the site.

In 1899, the Massachusetts Historical Society moved from its Tremont Street location to a handsome new Georgian Revival building on Boylston Street at the corner of the Fenway. The following year, Symphony Hall, designed by McKim, Mead, and White in a splendid Renaissance-classic style, was constructed on the corner of Huntington and Massachusetts Avenues as an appropriate home for the world-famous Boston Symphony Orchestra that Colonel Henry Lee Higginson had created in 1881. Farther west along Huntington Avenue, Northeastern University began a series of buildings that would gradually expand over the years, and in the same area Eben Jordan, whose father had founded the Jordan Marsh Company, built a beautiful opera house at his own expense to provide further adornment to an area of the city that was already becoming famous for its cultural institutions. It was Huntington Avenue, near the Fenway marshes, that was chosen as the new site for Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, with its Ionic temple portico, when it was moved from its original Copley Square location in 1909. Not far away was the dazzling "Palace" that Mrs. Isabella Stewart Gardner ("Mrs. Jack") had built for her own pleasure. This was a structure that was an *objet d'art* in itself, a transplanted Florentine *palazzo* that became in turn a repository for her own impressive collection of fine art, a showplace for innumerable concerts, and a cultural center for the public of Boston to visit and enjoy.

This was a period in American history, too, when there was growing interest in the outdoors and in nature, in health and in exercise, in conserving natural resources and preserving the natural landscape. It was a time when the leaders of Boston were experimenting with their own ways of recapturing the natural greenery of the city, as the expansion of roads and the multiplication of buildings were fast destroying the natural environment. Many prominent civic

leaders developed the Franklin Park area in Dorchester, laid out the beautiful Arnold Arboretum in Jamaica Plain, cultivated the Fenway district, and created a series of parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers throughout the city. The city of Boston also brought in the famous landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, designer of New York's Central Park, to establish a natural boundary around the city. Olmsted eventually created a plan for a string of sparkling ponds and sylvan parks—eventually called Boston's "Emerald Necklace"—that was designed to run from the Public Garden down Commonwealth Avenue to the Fens, along the Jamaicaway to Franklin Park, and then down Columbia Road and along the South Boston strandway to Marine Park at City Point. It was a staggering project that not only provided the city with a natural boundary of exceptional beauty, but also provided a place where the working people of the city could come with their families to enjoy the beauties of nature.

While providing the immigrant population with edifices of great culture to inspire their minds, and parks of great beauty to improve their bodies, many Bostonians felt that more immediate and practical solutions should be found to help the newcomers assimilate into the American way of life. Some means had to be found to help transform those immigrants already living in the city into useful and responsible citizens. Prominent civic leaders, many of whom had previously been active as Liberal Republicans during the 1870s (known as "Mugwumps"), fighting against the corrupt politics of the Grant administration in Washington, now turned their efforts to civic improvements and good government in Boston. By the mid-1880s, they had established a number of clubs, societies, and associations with such names as the Massachusetts Society for Promoting Good Citizenship, the American Institute of Civics, the Citizens Association, and the Citizens Club of Boston. Ostensibly designed to eliminate graft and corruption in government, these associations also attempted to promote among newcomers a proper understanding of the democratic process and to indoctrinate them into the basic principles of Anglo-Saxon law. The associations published books and pamphlets on American history, held classes on the meaning of the Constitution, sponsored public lectures on current events, and promoted programs to acquaint newcomers with the numerous patriotic sites and historical monuments in the Boston area.

During this same period, social reformers became aware of the effectiveness of neighborhood centers, called settlement houses, functioning in such cities as Chicago, where Jane Addams's Hull House (established in 1889) offered a wide range of social and educational services to slum dwellers. A number

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of civic leaders promoted the creation of similar centers in Boston. They felt that more direct and personal contact between members of the upper class and people who were poor and disadvantaged would help produce friendlier relations among the different classes of the city. Robert A. Woods, for example, a well-known professional social worker, established a number of settlement houses in the poorer sections of the city, the most famous of which were South End House and West End House. Through this method, he encouraged the “better classes” of the city—often young men and women from Harvard and Radcliffe—to put their talents and education to good use by helping young immigrants—Irish, Italians, Jews—discover more acceptable roads to personal success and economic prosperity than resorting to crime or turning to politics. “Here was an institution which spoke to them in their own tongue, and made them feel at home in their solution to their problems,” wrote Philip Davis, a Russian-born Harvard student, who returned to teach classes at the Civic Service House on Salem Street in the North End. “Instead of having to reach out for it blindfolded, America was brought to them.” Another prominent Bostonian, Joseph Lee, later known as the Father of American Playgrounds, took a slightly different approach as he encouraged the construction of numerous parks and playgrounds for the underprivileged children of the city. He hoped in this manner not only to provide youngsters with opportunities for wholesome play and recreation, but also to make them better citizens by building up their health, their character, and their vitality, in accordance with the old Roman maxim: “A sound mind in a sound body.”

Among its other accomplishments, the settlement movement gave a number of Boston women the opportunity to create what the historian Sarah Deutsch, in her book *Women in the City*, describes as “female urban space” in a city whose public spaces, up to that point, were almost totally and unequivocally male-dominated. The first incursion of women into the immigrant neighborhoods had come during the 1870s and 1880s, and consisted largely of wealthy, upper-class matrons from Beacon Hill and the Back Bay. They set out to perform what they saw as their Christian duty to relieve the suffering of the poor and the disadvantaged, and, in the process, hoped to help mitigate what they regarded as the dangers of “European-style class hatred.” Increasingly, however, younger professional and college-educated women began replacing the generation of what Deutsch calls “elite transcendental volunteers.” In 1892, the establishment of Denison House in the crowded South End marked the movement of a number of Wellesley graduates into the congested immigrant

neighborhood, in the belief that the “influence of ladies” might be a good thing. Trying to compete with what they saw as the unsavory influence of the ward boss and the local political machine, the women not only offered courses in Shakespeare and Dante in their settlement house, but also set up kindergartens, day nurseries, boys’ clubs, men’s clubs, and reading rooms where the examples of clean living and neighborliness would enrich the lives of working-class families and improve their prospects for the future.

The women who came to work at Denison House were mostly college-educated professionals who tended to support themselves as professors, music teachers, artists, and writers. As time went on, they encouraged the brighter young women in the neighborhood to liberate themselves from the confining influences of the home, as well as from the stultifying routines of domestic service or factory labor. They urged them to go out into the competitive world of the city where they could live on their own, assume greater personal independence, and become “self-supporting and self-respecting.” In this regard, their efforts were supported by the opening in 1904 of the Boston Trade School for Girls in the South End, which was taken over by the Boston School Committee in 1909 as the first state-aided industrial school for females. Girls of high-school age learned typing, bookkeeping, shorthand, stenography, accounting, and other business subjects at the Trade School as well as at Boston Girls High School, which soon expanded its own clerical programs. As a result, an increasing number of young women, many of them second-generation Irish Catholics, were getting jobs at much higher wages as typists, stenographers, telephone operators, bookkeepers, accountants, salespersons, and buyers in department stores. With the Women’s Educational and Industrial Union creating a “union consciousness” among the rising tide of semiprofessional women, and with the Boston League of Women Voters promoting a greater sense of political entitlement as the prospects of woman’s suffrage came closer, Boston women began to assume a much more visible and independent role in the affairs of the city.

With greater interaction among members of the city’s various classes, and serious interest among older Bostonians to promote the physical and financial welfare of the newer and less prosperous residents, there were encouraging signs by the end of the nineteenth century that with continued patience and understanding, the Yankee and the Celt might be able to work out a more friendly and cooperative relationship. Hugh O’Brien, for example, proved to be surprisingly popular as the city’s first Irish-Catholic mayor. His ability to hold

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down the tax rate and repair the streets made him almost indistinguishable from the procession of Yankee mayors who had preceded him. And in the world of letters, John Boyle O'Reilly captured the attention and admiration of the Yankees. An exiled Irish nationalist who had escaped from an English penal colony in Australia, O'Reilly made his way to Boston and by the 1880s established himself as one of the city's most respected literary figures. Owner and editor of the *Boston Pilot*, O'Reilly argued for an independent Ireland, championed the cause of African Americans as well as American Indians, and in 1889 was invited to give the main address at the dedication of the Pilgrim Monument at Plymouth.

And there was Patrick Collins, another notable Irish immigrant who had lifted himself up by the bootstraps to earn a law degree from Harvard, establish a successful law practice, become a state legislator, and reorganize the state's Democratic party before going to Washington to serve in the U.S. Congress. Because of Collins's support for the Democratic party, President Grover Cleveland appointed him to the prestigious post of consul general at London, where he remained until 1896, when William McKinley and the Republicans regained the White House. After returning to Boston, Collins was persuaded to run for the office of mayor and in November 1901 defeated Republican Thomas N. Hart by the largest majority in the city's history. During his first two-year term as mayor, Collins ran a businesslike administration that so greatly impressed the city's financial leaders that he was reelected to a second two-year term in 1903, the first Democrat ever to carry every ward in the city. The triumphant reelection of Patrick Collins, with his ability to establish good relations with Protestants and Catholics alike, seemed to promise a long-lasting *pax politica* as Boston moved into the twentieth century.

It was, therefore, with the greatest of anguish that Bostonians reacted to the startling news that on September 14, 1905, only two months before the end of his second term, Mayor Patrick Collins had died suddenly at the Homestead Resort in Hot Springs, Virginia, where he had gone for a rest. The entire city was thrown into mourning as citizens of all races, creeds, and political affiliations praised the virtues of Patrick Collins and lamented his passing.* Clearly an era had come to an end, and the city faced an uncertain future. Almost all

* A committee of prominent citizens raised funds for a granite monument—declaring Patrick Collins to be “a talented, honest, generous, serviceable man”—that was placed on the Commonwealth Avenue Mall.

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the members of the older generation of citywide Irish political leaders who had believed in maintaining a harmonious relationship with the Yankee Democrats were now dead. John Boyle O'Reilly had died in 1890; Hugh O'Brien passed away in 1895; Patrick Maguire expired in 1896; Thomas Gargan would meet his end in 1908. The passing of this cycle of Democratic stalwarts meant not only the loss of a number of dedicated public servants, but also a significant change in the overall direction of political philosophy. Coming along was a younger generation of Irish politicians who were, for the most part, pragmatic in their approach and parochial in their outlook, concerned almost exclusively with what was happening in Boston and its neighborhoods. The new young leaders showed little interest in the Yankee community and displayed much less enthusiasm for maintaining the traditional alliance with the old Yankee Democrats. What the political future of Boston would be like, now that Patrick Collins was gone, was a matter of serious concern and anxious reflection.

9

A City Divided

WHEN he was a little boy growing up in Boston's North End, John Francis Fitzgerald could not engage in contact sports because of his short stature and frail constitution. Instead, he determined to become a championship runner. "He devoted his whole mind to the task of propelling his body forward as swiftly and smoothly as an animal in pursuit of prey," writes Doris Kearns Goodwin in *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys*.

John Fitzgerald was forty-two years old and the ward boss of the North End when he heard the shocking news of Patrick Collins's death on September 14, 1905. Like the champion sprinter he had always wanted to be, the scrappy young man was off the mark in an instant. Actually, he had been promoting his own candidacy for several years. He spoke regularly at churches and civic groups throughout the neighborhoods, and in 1902 took over control of Maguire's weekly newspaper, *The Republic*. Bright, bouncy, and energetic, Fitzgerald was a product of the boss system and accepted the system as he found it. He made his arrangements with as many of the other ward bosses as possible while forming temporary, uneasy, but indispensable alliances with conservative businessmen of the city. With the news of Collins's death, Fitzgerald swung into action. Mobilizing his supporters and organizing his machine, he caught everyone

off guard as he campaigned vigorously for the Democratic primary that was scheduled for November 14, 1905. Despite last-minute attempts by rival ward bosses to upend the young upstart, Fitzgerald defeated Martin Lomasney's man in the Democratic primary and then went on to defeat his Republican opponent in the December general election. On January 1, 1906, John Francis Fitzgerald was sworn into office as the city's first Boston-born Irish-Catholic mayor.

Fitzgerald had promised Boston voters that his administration would function in an efficient and "businesslike" manner, and that there would be no graft or corruption during his term of office. However, the traditions of ethnic friendship and neighborhood loyalty proved stronger than the new mayor's idealistic promises. City Hall became so crowded with throngs of cronies and lobbyists, pensioners and office-seekers, salesmen and contractors, newspaper reporters and city workers, that Fitzgerald was forced to put off all city business until after business hours. He spent his regular office hours talking with visitors and tourists; after five o'clock he met with his department heads. Evenings were an endless round of parties, banquets, wakes, athletic events, and public functions.

Boston newspapers expressed shock at the reports of scandalous behavior going on at City Hall by Fitzgerald and his "wanton mercenaries," and complained about the extensive payroll padding that allowed the hiring of "scores of men who did not labor." Boston's Brahmin community found its worst fears finally realized. The situation had been bad enough when the Irish had grown so numerous that they virtually monopolized the municipal services, but the upper classes of the city could still put one of their own in the mayor's office—or at least select an accommodating and "acceptable" Irishman like Hugh O'Brien or Patrick Collins to serve as occasional representatives for their ethnic constituencies. The challenge from the likes of Fitzgerald, however, was something else again. Not only was he regarded as a brash opportunist and vulgar upstart but, more important, his role as a representative of the neighborhood ward system would provide him with the opportunity to centralize control of Boston's Democratic machine. It was this frightening prospect of a complete Irish-Democratic takeover that prompted Yankee Republicans to even greater efforts to save their city from the evils of what they were already calling "Fitzgeraldism."

For several years, the upper classes of Boston had been working seriously on various methods of reforming city management and improving the quality of candidates for public office. In many respects, this was part of a nationwide

“progressive” movement taking place at the turn of the century that called for more professional and efficient approaches to the mechanics of city government. By selecting “clean” candidates without ties to either crooked political machines or corrupt business corporations, reformers were certain they could return the blessings of “good government” to the people. Political reformers hoped that such a movement would encourage greater citizen participation and promote a more dedicated spirit of civic responsibility. In such large cities as Toledo, Detroit, and Milwaukee, reform mayors ousted powerful bosses, broke up corrupt political machines, fostered municipal ownership of public utilities, and experimented with special commissions and city-manager forms of government. Educational reformers, too, were proclaiming the virtues of democracy and the benefits of academic excellence. At Harvard, A. Lawrence Lowell took over the presidency in 1908 and immediately called for an end to the traditional admissions system. By placing too much emphasis on the social distinctions of wealth and family, he said, Harvard was failing to fulfill its mission of bringing together “youths of promise of every kind from every part of the country.” At the same time, Princeton’s new president, Woodrow Wilson, was eliminating the exclusive “eating clubs” in order to bring democracy to the campus and upgrade the university’s standards.

There were many reform-minded Bostonians who felt that their city would also benefit from taking the direction of such city departments as fire, police, finance, and public works out of the hands of untrained politicians and placing them into the more capable hands of professional experts without deference to party politics. Many of these same Bostonians, however, also saw these institutional reforms as effective means of keeping the less desirable elements of the Irish population out of political life in favor of those middle-class professionals—lawyers, bankers, financiers—who were more acceptable to the local advocates of good government.

One of the first organized efforts of old Bostonians to translate the theoretical ideas of “progressivism” into a more practical way of controlling the political future of the city came when various business groups banded together in 1903 to form the Good Government Association (GGA). Calling for political reform, an end to organized corruption, efficiency in administration, and a lower tax rate, these men represented the conservative financial interests of the community. Almost entirely Yankee, composed of property owners, bankers, financiers, lawyers, and real estate men, the membership of the GGA saw it as their responsibility to support for public office candidates who possessed

background, breeding, education, experience, and integrity. They made it clear that they would support “good” Irishmen for public office—the “better kind” who possessed the qualities they had in mind. At the same time, however, they believed it their duty to oppose the type of Irish politicians who were more interested in jobs, contracts, and personal favors than in good government and honest administration.

The activities of John Francis Fitzgerald during his first two-year term as mayor, 1906–1907, caused the GGA to increase its efforts at reform, especially after the Republican-dominated state legislature created a special Finance Commission to investigate “all matters pertaining to the finances of the city.” The report of this watchdog agency, consisting of seven prominent citizens, was highly critical of Fitzgerald’s spending and contract policies, and was undoubtedly instrumental in the defeat of Fitzgerald in 1907 by Republican George Albee Hibbard.

Having achieved their initial goal in removing Fitzgerald from office, the reformers took immediate steps to make certain that neither Fitzgerald nor any other machine Democrat out of the wards would get back into the mayor’s office again. Members of the Finance Commission asked the state legislature to authorize a new city charter that would change the basic structure of Boston’s government. The eight-man Board of Aldermen would be completely abolished; the seventy-five-member Common Council, whose members represented each of the twenty-five wards in the city, would be replaced by a single city council, whose nine members would be elected at large. The members of this greatly reduced body would serve terms of two years, while the term of the mayor would be expanded to four years. The new mayor would become a much stronger figure, with veto power over all acts of the city council, and with all of his department heads certified by the Civil Service Commission. In a further effort to take municipal administration out of party politics—and obviously to cripple the growing Democratic machine in Boston—the Finance Commission stipulated that city elections would be conducted on a nonpartisan basis. A new city charter, incorporating the proposed changes, was passed by the Massachusetts state legislature in 1909. With the vigorous support of the members of the GGA, the new charter was adopted by the voters of Boston in November 1909, just in time for the special mayoral election of January 1910.

The passage of the new city charter made progressives, reformers, Mugwumps, and good-government advocates more optimistic than ever before about their chances of putting one of their own “clean” candidates in the mayor’s

office. For some time they had been grooming a public-spirited banker named James Jackson Storrow, whose credentials were impeccable, whose integrity was unquestioned, and who seemed unbeatable. To supply Storrow with experienced political workers and an effective campaign strategy, the GGA organized the Citizens Municipal League, composed of representatives of the GGA and the Finance Commission, as well as members of the Yankee political establishment. Once Fitzgerald announced his plans to run for a second term, Storrow's supporters plastered the walls and lampposts with posters denouncing the "evils of fitzgeraldism" in hopes of capturing enough respectable middle-class Irish voters to tip the scales in Storrow's favor.

But prim, proper, polished Storrow didn't have a chance. Never an effective public speaker, he was no match for the aggressive, two-fisted attack of his blustery Irish opponent. Fitzgerald launched a whirlwind campaign with a spectacular motorcade that took him into every ward in the city. Perched high on the backseat of a large touring car, he denounced Storrow as a tool of the "merchants of Boston," called for "manhood against money," and promised his supporters "a bigger, better, busier Boston." Before he left each neighborhood gathering, he would sing "Sweet Adeline" at the top of his lungs to the delight of his partisans, who nicknamed him "Honey Fitz." To the Yankees' chagrin, they saw Fitzgerald win the election of 1910 by a plurality of 1,402 votes, becoming the first Boston-born Irish-Democrat to hold a four-year term as mayor of Boston—an honor the Yankees had so carefully designed for one of their own.

The only ray of hope left to the frustrated downtown establishment was that when Fitzgerald finally completed his term as mayor, he would not try for another. As the end of his second term approached, "Honey Fitz" was suggesting that he was getting bored with the office and was ready to move on to greener pastures—perhaps a run for U.S. Senate. Since neither the Democratic City Committee nor the local ward bosses appeared to be grooming any other Irish candidate, the Yankees had every reason to believe they could take back the office again. It came as a complete surprise, therefore, when early in 1913, thirty-nine-year-old James Michael Curley of Roxbury announced that he would attempt to succeed Fitzgerald in the upcoming mayoral election.

Born in 1874 to immigrant parents, Curley grew up in the mudflats behind the City Hospital in Boston's South End. When his father died suddenly, the ten-year-old Jim worked at a variety of jobs—delivering groceries, peddling newspapers, working at a local drug store—while attending public school. He spent most of his evenings at a local tobacco shop, where he listened



Thanks to his new touring car, “Honey Fitz” was able to campaign in every city ward during the course of a single evening. As mayor, Fitzgerald organized massive civic celebrations for the 1912 championship Boston Red Sox team. Here he poses (center) with fast-ball pitcher Smoky Joe Wood (back with bow tie) and other members of the Sox team that won the 1912 World Series. *Courtesy of Northeastern University.*

to old-timers swap yarns about the fascinating world of politics in Ward 17. Reading voraciously and cultivating his remarkable speaking voice, young Curley worked his way up in local party politics and in 1899 won a seat on the Common Council. A year later, he ousted “Pea Jacket” Maguire for the leadership of Ward 17 and became the youngest ward boss in the city. Setting up his headquarters in the South End with his own version of the Tammany Club, Curley solidified his control in the ward while he continued to move up the political ladder by serving a term as a state representative. In 1903, however, while running for a seat on the city’s Board of Aldermen, his promising political career almost came to an abrupt end. Curley and a friend were caught taking

a Post Office civil service examination for two young Irish immigrants. Curley and his friend were found guilty by federal judge Francis Cabot Lowell of “defrauding” the U.S. government and sentenced to two months in the Charles Street jail. Instead of apologizing for what he had done, Curley explained to his constituents that he “did it for a friend.” He won his seat on the Board of Aldermen, where he remained until 1909, and then moved on to the city council. A year later, Curley ran successfully for a seat in the U.S. Congress and moved his family to Washington, D.C., where he served two uneventful terms.

Never feeling at home in the nation’s capital, James Michael Curley took the news of John Francis Fitzgerald’s impending retirement as the signal for his own announcement that he would be a candidate for the office of mayor of Boston. In making this unilateral announcement, Curley made it quite clear from the outset that he was acting on his own. He refused to seek the blessings of the city’s influential Democratic machine, which he ridiculed as a pack of “empty eggshells” incapable of delivering the votes, and he publicly dismissed the Irish ward bosses as parasites and hypocrites—a “collection of chowderheads.” At the same time, he ridiculed the members of the prestigious GGA as a bunch of simple-minded “Goo Goos,” referred to the business leaders of the city as the “State Street wrecking crew,” and characterized the distinguished Boston aristocracy as “clubs of female faddists, old gentlemen with disordered livers, or pessimists croaking over imaginary good old days and ignoring the sunlit present.” Instead, he appealed directly and personally to voters in the city’s various ethnic neighborhoods, on his own terms. He created his constituency through a political plebiscite of his own making—claiming the people as his only source of power and legitimacy.

With considerable natural intelligence, determined application, and a remarkable photographic memory, young Curley had devoured books on law, politics, literature, the fine arts, and a host of other subjects. By the time he had become a public figure, he dressed impeccably, attended the symphony, talked knowledgeably on oriental jade, quoted the classics, and cited appropriate passages from Shakespeare, Tennyson, and Kipling whenever the occasion provided an opportunity for him to display the cultivated trappings of a learned Bostonian. Unlike former Irish mayors Hugh O’Brien and Patrick Collins, however, Curley never failed to reassure his working-class supporters in the neighborhoods that with all his pomp and elegance, he had not abandoned his roots. He continued to make his home in Jamaica Plain, attended Sunday Mass regularly with his wife and children, and appeared regularly and prominently

at such important functions as wakes, weddings, christenings, and St. Patrick's Day parades. He may have cultivated a rich and mellifluous Oxonian accent with which to delight his audiences and enthrall his listeners, but none of his followers—scrubwomen, teamsters, dockworkers, streetcar conductors, policemen, firemen, housewives—ever doubted for a minute that “Young Jim” was still “one of us.” Curley was clearly ready to take over the office of mayor.

There was a moment of uncertainty, however, when Fitzgerald changed his mind about retiring and announced that he would try for another term. Curley, in turn, announced that he planned to give a series of public lectures, including one called “Great Lovers, from Cleopatra to Toodles.” Since this would obviously bring up Fitz’s well-known dalliance with a blonde cigarette girl from the Ferncroft Inn named Toodles Ryan, Fitzgerald apparently decided that discretion was the better part of valor and withdrew from the race “for reasons of health.” In a panic-stricken attempt to prevent this irreverent upstart from taking office, the Democratic City Committee and the GGA joined forces in an unlikely coalition. They put their combined support behind Thomas J. Kenny of South Boston, a successful Irish-Catholic attorney, president of the city council, and a candidate they hoped would take the middle-class Irish vote away from Curley. But Curley’s superb political showmanship, his grandiloquent speeches, his biting wit, his gigantic outdoor rallies, and his glowing promises of a more prosperous future turned the trick. He defeated Kenny by six thousand votes, carrying sixteen of the twenty-six wards and running ahead in all the lower-income neighborhoods of the city—even in Kenny’s own home district of South Boston.

The new mayor captured public attention by breaking with precedent right away. Instead of the customary swearing-in ceremony held in the quiet chambers of City Hall, attended by family members and a few friends, Curley held his inauguration in Tremont Temple, where some twenty-five hundred of his loyal supporters had an opportunity to salute their champion—“the people’s mayor”—in grand fashion. Once installed in office, Curley more than met the expectations of his gleeful supporters, and the fears of his disgruntled opponents. The day after he was sworn into office, he sent Yankees into fits of apoplexy by proposing to sell the Public Garden for \$10 million. He would put half the money into the city coffers, he blandly suggested, and use the other half to purchase a series of smaller public gardens out in the neighborhoods where they would be “more easily accessible to the general public.” Even

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while the Yankees were sputtering at this “outrageous” and “preposterous” suggestion, the newly elected mayor further horrified the guardians of the city’s traditions by proposing that a water-pumping station be installed under the sacred grounds of Boston Common, and that a public comfort station be provided for the convenience of tourists and visitors.

Although it seems that Curley was acting more out of mischief than spite, the battle lines were clearly drawn. If there had been any prospect of even a temporary alliance between Curley and the conservative elements of Boston society, it was gone now. The Brahmin aristocracy and the conservative elements of Boston society would never cooperate with a political leader who openly mocked their institutions and trifled with their proud sense of family heritage. Curley understood this perfectly and made it clear that he was not at all intimidated by what he regarded as the outworn power of the local bluebloods. What Boston needed now, he boldly proclaimed, were “men, and mothers of men, not gabbing spinsters and dog-raising matrons in federation assembled.” The Brahmins must learn, said the new mayor, that “the New England of rum, codfish, and slaves is as dead as Julius Caesar.”

During his first months in office, Mayor Curley surprised many observers by putting on a great display of reform as he slashed salaries of city employees, fired many of Fitzgerald’s appointees, and canceled a number of his predecessor’s “sweetheart” contracts. Local progressives expressive pleasure at this turn of events, and the Republican *Boston Herald* praised the new mayor for his reform measures. In reality, however, Curley was using the pretense of cleaning house as a means of replacing Fitzgerald’s people with his own appointees and establishing himself as the central focus of patronage in Boston. In short order, the corridors and staircases of City Hall teemed with constituents looking for jobs and favors of every description. Curley proceeded to make his own arrangements with a whole new army of contractors, vendors, and lobbyists who paraded through his office at all hours of the day and night.

More than personal showmanship or political demagoguery, this new routine was actually a basic realignment of power in the city—the start of the “Curley machine.” The local ward bosses had always wielded extraordinary power because of their ability to dispense patronage directly to their constituents. Curley now stripped the ward bosses of this prerogative, cutting their political legs out from under them. A few, such as Martin Lomasney in the West End, were able to withstand the force of Curley’s attacks and maintain some semblance of control in their local districts, but most others simply withered

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Proud of his title as “the people’s mayor,” James Michael Curley poses with a jackhammer to publicize his efforts at large-scale construction projects in the city, which provided benefits and jobs for his grateful supporters in the various ethnic neighborhoods of the city. For nearly forty years Curley dominated the Boston political scene, appealing to ethnic voters in the city’s various neighborhoods. *Courtesy of the Bostonian Society/Old State House.*

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on the vine. Day and night, fifty-two weeks of the year, James Michael Curley alone would dispense favors to his citywide constituents, either from his desk at City Hall or from the elegant new home he had built on the Jamaica way.

Curley had been in office scarcely six months when a general European war broke out in August 1914 and threatened to engulf the world. At first, most Americans tended to follow President Woodrow Wilson's admonition to remain neutral "in thought as well as in deed." As time went on, however, public sentiment gradually shifted against the Germans. The startling announcement that after February 1, 1917, German submarines would follow a "sink on sight" policy made hostilities almost inevitable as a series of unarmed American merchant vessels were sent to the bottom of the ocean the following month. On the evening of April 2, 1917, President Wilson went before a joint session of Congress, reviewed the hostile actions of the German government, and asked for a declaration of war. Within the week, both the Senate and the House voted overwhelmingly in favor of a war with Germany.

Boston suddenly became a patriotic city where the word "slacker" was used to characterize any young man who did not rush off immediately to put on the uniform. Recruiting tents went up on Lafayette Mall, "Liberty Bond" drives were launched all over the city, and thousands of young draftees traveled to nearby Ayer to receive their basic training at Camp Devens. Those who stayed at home worked with such agencies as the Red Cross, the YMCA, the YWCA, the National Catholic War Council, the Jewish Welfare Board, the Salvation Army, and the Knights of Columbus. Schoolchildren raised money to send "comfort kits" to soldiers; "Victory boys" tended victory gardens; women's organizations held dances to raise funds for surgical dressings that went to the local Red Cross. Families put up with "wheatless Mondays," "meatless Tuesdays," and "porkless Saturdays," and because of a lack of coal some schools had to be closed on a temporary basis. Boston became the military and naval headquarters of New England, as well as the principal wartime shipping port to Europe. Mines were placed in the harbor, and a wire net was stretched across the channels to keep out German submarines.

The people of Boston followed the news of the fighting overseas very closely but paid particular attention to reports concerning the 26th Division—the "Yankee Division"—that had been formed from the national guard of New England. The 26th was one of the first four American divisions to arrive in France, the first to go into the trenches, and the first to take part in major engagements at Belleau Woods, Château-Thierry, Saint-Mihiel, and the

Argonne Forest. But the exciting news of the fighting in Europe was suddenly overshadowed by the frightening specter of illness and disease at home. Late in August 1918, Boston newspapers reported that sailors aboard a training ship at Commonwealth Pier had come down with what was called "Spanish influenza." By early September, readers were informed that thousands of soldiers at Fort Devens had come down with the disease. Boston found itself one of many American cities in the grip of a mysterious epidemic. By the end of September, the flu was racing through the city and the death rate was accelerating at an alarming pace. Theaters, clubs, lodges, and other gathering places were shut down, and at the end of the first week in October all the Boston schools were ordered closed until further notice. Deaths were happening so fast, and gravediggers were so scarce, that circus tents were used to cover stacks of coffins in local graveyards until funeral and burial arrangements could be made. On October 1, 1918, the epidemic reached its frightening peak with 206 deaths reported.

Fortunately, by the first part of November, the worst of the epidemic began to diminish, although people continued to suffer for many months from the effects of influenza and pneumonia. Schools were allowed to reopen; boxing matches started up again; schoolboy football games resumed; saloons, billiard parlors, and soda fountains were permitted to resume business. When the Yankee Division returned home from Europe on April 25, 1919, people flocked into downtown Boston to line the streets and greet the war heroes as they marched down Tremont Street to the blare of brass bands and the cheers of the crowd.

At just about the same time the war was coming to an end, so was the term of James Michael Curley, mayor of Boston. At that point, his political fortunes looked none too bright. Wartime business was still booming, employment was high, voters continued to make money, and most people were fairly content. There were no burning issues Curley could hammer away at; there were no controversial issues he could stir up. The ward bosses stepped in quickly and seized the opportunity to oust the young upstart who had embarrassed them so shamefully. They came out in support of Andrew J. Peters, a trustworthy Republican of "unquestioned integrity," and prevented Curley from being reelected. In January 1919, Curley walked down the steps of City Hall into private life and a brief period of political obscurity.

Whether or not it was an omen for the future, only a short time later Boston's North End was rocked by a terrifying explosion. Shortly after noon on

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January 15, 1919, a giant molasses storage tank on Commercial Street, opposite Copp's Hill, exploded and sent some fourteen thousand tons of liquid molasses cascading down the streets of the North End. Twenty-three people lost their lives, and more than 150 were injured. Horses were swallowed up, houses were destroyed, and warehouses were smashed to pieces. Although the sticky mess was finally cleaned up, for many years Bostonians insisted they could smell the sweet odor of molasses on hot summer days.

Once wartime production began to decline, people all over the United States found that their incomes were falling behind as the cost of living in 1919 rose to double what it had been only five years earlier. The frustration of workers broke out in a flood of public demonstrations that spawned some thirty-six hundred strikes during 1919. In New York, harbor workers walked off the job; in Seattle, shipworkers conducted a work stoppage; in Boston, fishermen went on strike, elevated railroad workers walked off their jobs, and female telephone operators struck for better hours and higher wages. It was in the fall of 1919, too, that some nine hundred Boston policemen joined the American Federation of Labor in an effort to obtain higher wages and improved working conditions. When police commissioner Edwin Upton Curtis dismissed the patrolmen he considered responsible for organizing the union, fellow patrolmen responded by walking off their jobs on September 9, 1919.

Left without organized police protection, the city of Boston found itself virtually defenseless against the senseless violence of vandals and trouble-makers. On the first night, trouble broke out in the downtown area as mobs smashed windows, looted clothing stores, and broke into jewelry shops along Washington, Tremont, and Boylston Streets. Quickly the violence spread to the neighborhoods, where rioters took advantage of the absence of police protection to start bonfires, break streetcar windows, and ransack grocery stores. In an effort to prevent another night of violence, the next morning Mayor Andrew Peters called out the state guard, although he was already being assisted by a makeshift volunteer militia force made up of prominent Back Bay Brahmins, old-time Beacon Hill residents, and about fifty Harvard underclassmen. Late that afternoon, Governor Calvin Coolidge proclaimed that "There is no right to strike against the public safety anywhere, anytime," called up additional regiments of the national guard, and ordered them to duty in Boston.

While the senseless vandalism continued for several more nights, the arrival of helmeted national guard units, equipped with rifles and bayonets, clearly turned the tide. Taking up positions in the heart of the downtown business



Demands for higher pay, better hours, and more sanitary working conditions led some nine hundred members of the Boston police department to leave their stations and go out on strike on September 9, 1919. City and state officials denounced the actions of the patrolmen and used national guard troops to restore order in the city. No striking policeman was ever rehired by the City of Boston. *Courtesy of the Boston Public Library, Print Department.*

district, as well as in the various neighborhoods, the troops quickly restored order in the streets; except for sporadic incidents, the troubles gradually ceased. On December 21, 1919, the last units of the state guard were finally relieved of their patrol duties. No striking policeman was ever rehired, and an entirely new Boston police force was recruited, in large part from young men recently discharged from military service.

By the time the aftereffects of the police strike had died down, the postwar economy was beginning to even out as Calvin Coolidge prepared to go to Washington as Warren G. Harding's vice-president. It was also time for another Boston election. Preoccupied with the leisurely pursuits of golf and yachting, as well as with the charms of an eleven-year-old girl with the improbable name of

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Starr Faithfull, Andrew J. Peters in his administration from 1918 to 1922 proved to be a major disappointment. He left the details of city government to underlings who sold jobs, gave out promotions, and assigned municipal contracts in a prodigal manner. Charging wholesale graft and corruption in the Peters administration, James Michael Curley reappeared as a “reform” candidate and called on voters to “turn the rascals out.” Realizing that they would be unable to stop the new Curley bandwagon, members of the Republican-dominated state legislature passed a bill making it illegal for a mayor of Boston to succeed himself. Despite the objections of ward bosses, city bankers, and Republican businessmen, in 1922 James Michael Curley won a second term by a slight margin. After a victorious inauguration at Mechanics Hall before twelve thousand cheering spectators, the new mayor prepared to launch the city into a new era of building and expansion that would benefit the poor, the elderly, and the disadvantaged—all in keeping with his prideful boast that he was, indeed, “the people’s mayor.”

The devotion of Curley’s followers and the magnetism of his hold on the voters could be sustained, however, only as long as the mayor delivered the two things his constituents needed most—benefits and jobs. And this was precisely what Curley set out to do, with a zest and efficiency that exhausted newspaper reporters who tried to dog his footsteps and unravel the financial knots that held together his numerous operations. Using the force of his office, Curley produced all kinds of social, medical, and recreational facilities for his low-income supporters in the neighborhoods that fringed the central city. He enlarged the City Hospital, created a series of local health units, constructed branch libraries, developed extensive beaches and bathhouses, and built playgrounds, stadiums, and recreational facilities in different parts of the city. He extended the harbor tunnel to East Boston, expanded the subway system, tore down slums, paved streets, built bridges, and widened roads. Not only did Curley provide extensive benefits for his grateful constituents through these ambitious construction projects, but the projects themselves provided the necessary jobs upon which his whole system of patronage depended.

This rash of citywide construction projects cost a great deal of money, however, and in almost no time conservative businessmen and bankers expressed horror at the way in which evaluations and taxes were climbing to astronomical heights. Curley simply brushed aside their objections and protestations with a careless wave of his hand. Tax money was supposed to be used to help the people, not hoarded away in bank vaults, he insisted. Whether the bills were paid or the

budget balanced was immaterial to Curley as long as his credit was good and he could borrow more money. When there were no funds left in the city treasury to pay bills or cover salaries, he went before the state legislature to borrow additional money until he was able to bring in more revenue by raising the tax rate a notch higher. If there was insufficient money on hand to meet operating expenses until the tax money came in, he went to the bankers of the city for a loan. Over 90 percent of the banking resources of the entire city of Boston at the time was in the hands of the two largest international banking houses—Lee, Higginson and Company, and Kidder, Peabody and Company—as well as the two largest banks in the city—the National Shawmut Bank and the First National Bank of Boston—along with the twenty-one other banks and trust companies whose directors had such distinguished names as Amory, Choate, Gaston, Lawrence, Lyman, Saltonstall, Sears, Shaw, and Storrow. Although such conservative bankers were not at all sympathetic to Curley or his harebrained schemes to raise more money that would enable him to launch more projects that would inevitably push the tax rate even higher, the mayor usually had ways of getting the loans he needed. A gentle reminder that some city inspector might well order a certain bank closed because of “faulty wiring” or “improper plumbing” was often enough to open the reluctant Brahmin pocketbook.

But the mayor’s high-handed tactics also helped widen the breach between the “inner city” and the “outer city,” between the Yankee and the Celt, between the Boston of the Protestants and the Boston of the Catholics. Well-defined neighborhoods, with distinctive ethnic characteristics and identifiable boundaries, had been a feature of Boston’s history since the early part of the nineteenth century. What Curley had done was to weld these disparate elements together into a powerful political force capable of offsetting the opposition of those Yankees who submitted to his power but continued to deny him the legitimacy he sought as mayor of the entire city. Curley left the residents of the inner city, therefore, to wallow in their Puritan self-righteousness and turned his attention and his municipal favors during the 1920s and 1930s to the people of that “other” Boston, who never failed to give him their devotion—and their votes. While he built playgrounds in Dorchester and Roxbury, Scollay Square turned into a place where ugly tattoo parlors and sleazy burlesque houses blighted the historic landscape. While he planned extensive bathhouses in South Boston, the docks along Atlantic Avenue’s waterfront section rotted on their pilings. While he laid out miles of paved sidewalks in Charlestown and East Boston, the cobblestones of Beacon Hill fell apart and the lampposts came tumbling

down. The idea of improving “new” Boston with money extracted from “old” Boston struck Curley as a particularly appropriate way of balancing the scales that had, for so long, been weighted against the people he represented.

Because the new state law made it impossible for the sitting mayor to succeed himself, Curley’s inability to run again in 1926 opened the door to an amazing number of candidates, including Frances Curtis, the first woman to run for mayor in Boston’s history. The record of women candidates in Boston elections during the first two decades after women were granted suffrage in 1920 was “hardly stellar,” according to the historian Sarah Deutsch. Despite the fact that at the beginning of the 1920s Boston women outnumbered men by nearly ten thousand, and at the end of the decade by nearly twenty thousand, only three women were elected to the school committee, and only one woman managed to get elected to the city council. In 1937, Mildred Gleason Harris of the South End, whose “brilliant blue eyes” and “ready smile” seemed to have captivated the *Boston Globe* political reporter, won a special election to take over the council seat of her brother Richard, who died in office. Women seeking the more exalted office of mayor, however, would have to wait much longer even to get on the ballot. Frances Curtis was a longtime member of the Boston School Committee who saw Curley’s absence in 1926, along with the large number of male candidates, as an opportunity to capitalize on the women’s vote. Having brought up nine brothers and sisters, Curtis felt fully qualified to run the city, which she saw as little more than a large household. “With women in office,” she declared, “there will be no graft. Women will not stand for graft.” By the time the ballots were printed, however, Curtis had been dropped from the list because she failed to gather the required number of signatures. In the subsequent voting, the election was won by Malcolm E. Nichols of Jamaica Plain, a Harvard-educated lawyer, former state legislator, and federal tax collector who was supported by the GGA. As the city’s last Brahmin mayor, Nichols served from 1926 to 1930 but was unable to succeed himself (unfortunately for the Republicans, their state law cut both ways) and had to give way to James Michael Curley, who returned in 1930 to try for a third four-year term. Curley’s opponent this time was fifty-two-year-old Frederick W. Mansfield, an Irish-Catholic Democrat, president of the Massachusetts Bar Association, and former state treasurer. Not only did the dignified and impressive Mansfield (whom Curley once described as “colorful as a lump of mud”) receive the backing of the GGA, but he was also rumored to have the blessing of His Eminence Cardinal William Henry O’Connell.



William Henry O'Connell assumed the post of archbishop of Boston in 1907 and was a powerful force in Boston for the first half of the twentieth century. Elevated to the post of Cardinal in 1911, O'Connell exerted a strong personal influence not only in the management of church affairs, but also on the character of Catholicism throughout the archdiocese of Boston. *Courtesy of the Archdiocese of Boston.*

The fact that Curley beat Mansfield by a margin of some twenty-one thousand votes certainly did nothing to improve the already strained relations between the wily and manipulative mayor and the distinguished prelate who wanted to raise the standards of his flock. When he first took over in 1907 as archbishop of Boston at the age of forty-four, O'Connell saw that Irish

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Catholics were no longer the powerless and oppressed minority they had been half a century earlier. Already they had begun to move up into positions of considerable power and influence. John F. Fitzgerald, for example, a Boston-born Irish Catholic, had been elected mayor of Boston in 1906, and in 1914 David I. Walsh had become the commonwealth's first Irish-Catholic governor. Cardinal O'Connell urged the members of his flock to become independent of Anglo-Saxon social and cultural standards, and focus on their own distinctive cultural heritage. The prelate established what historian Paula Kane called a "triumphalist, separatist Catholic subculture" throughout the archdiocese, deliberately designed to free Catholics from all forms of Yankee influence.

Catholics were warned never to set foot in a Protestant church, or to participate in non-Catholic rituals and ceremonies—even in semisocial occasions such as marriages and funerals. Youngsters were cautioned not to join Boy Scout or Girl Scout troops, not to participate in YMCA or YWCA activities, and not to attend social gatherings at local neighborhood clubs. Instead, church leaders organized a series of parallel and exclusively Catholic social activities for young people, such as Catholic Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops, as well as the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO). Men enrolled in the Holy Name Society and women joined the Legion of Mary as a way of dramatizing the unity of their religious purpose and the impressive size of their numbers. Wittingly or unwittingly, Cardinal O'Connell supplied an additional socioreligious dimension to the political and fiscal policies of Mayor James Michael Curley that effectually divided Boston into two entirely separate and often antagonistic camps. "The new assertive mood in the Church," observes Curley's biographer Jack Beatty, "closely paralleled the new ethnic politics."

It was as the leader of an increasingly divided city that James Michael Curley dominated the Boston political landscape for more than thirty years, from before World War I to after the close of World War II. After his first term as mayor of Boston from 1914 to 1918, he served three more terms as the city's chief executive—from 1922 to 1926, from 1930 to 1934, and finally from 1946 to 1950. In addition to his duties as mayor, he also served two terms in the U.S. Congress, first from 1911 to 1914, and later from 1943 to 1946. In 1935, he served a single two-year term as governor of the commonwealth, earning him the flattering title of "Governor" wherever he went for the rest of his days. After that, however, he began to find it more and more difficult to maintain his hold on the electorate. In 1936, for example, he was beaten in a race for the U.S. Senate by Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., and the following year he suffered

a particularly disappointing defeat in a bid for mayor of Boston, losing to Maurice J. Tobin, a handsome young Irish-Catholic politician from Roxbury's Mission Hill district.

Curley's loss to Tobin was all the more bitter because he had become the victim of the kind of dirty trick he had used so often and so successfully against others. Election day, November 2, 1937, fell on All Soul's Day, and as thousands of the faithful left morning Mass, they saw below the masthead of the *Boston Post* a statement by Cardinal O'Connell declaring: "The walls are raised against honest men in civic life." Below this statement was a ringing endorsement of Maurice J. Tobin as "an honest, clean, and competent young man." Most readers failed to notice that the endorsement of Tobin was not part of the Cardinal's statement (actually made six years earlier), but had been cleverly appended by the editors of the *Post*. Voters went to the polls and apparently voted the way they thought His Eminence had directed, and Curley's try for a fourth term was doomed. Although he managed to win the Democratic nomination for governor in 1938, he lost the general election to the Republican candidate, Leverett Saltonstall, who captured a surprising number of Irish votes by capitalizing on what he laughingly called his "South Boston face." And in November 1941, in another effort to regain the office of mayor, Curley was once again defeated by Maurice Tobin.

The excitement over the 1941 Boston mayoral election was hardly over when, on December 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked the American fleet at Pearl Harbor. As a big-city mayor in a nation at war, Maurice Tobin became almost totally preoccupied with the innumerable details of civilian defense and home-front activities. Not only did he have to set aside any plans he had for reducing expenditures and balancing the budget, but in the face of wartime inflation, he had to modify his program of fiscal controls.

Wartime prosperity gave a much-needed jolt to the city's sagging economy. A global conflict of this magnitude brought an end to more than a decade of depression and provided welcome jobs for men and women in war plants, factories, armories, and shipyards. The Bethlehem shipyards in East Boston and the Fore River shipyards in Quincy were operating around the clock, while the huge army base in South Boston offered additional employment opportunities. Walworth Manufacturing Company, United Carr Fastener, the Commercial Filters Company, Linde Air Products, and many other private industries in the Greater Boston area geared up for wartime demands. Servicemen and -women on weekend passes or two-week furloughs, together with

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civilian visitors traveling on official business, provided a thriving commerce for hotels, restaurants, and nightclubs throughout the city. Scollay Square, because of its proximity to the Charlestown Navy Yard, became a favorite haunt for thousands of sailors, who frequented the tattoo parlors, the photo studios, the burlesque houses, and the hot dog stands for which the district had become world famous.

Because of the scarcity of essential raw materials, the government issued books of ration stamps for hard-to-get products such as sugar, coffee, butter, cheese, gasoline, and fuel oil. Civic groups and youth organizations turned in heaps of scrap metal to be recycled, or collected piles of old automobile tires for scrap-rubber drives. Fears of espionage and fifth-column activities caused city officials to station armed military guards along the beaches and waterfront districts to defend against possible German submarine attacks. Small red-white-and-blue service flags hung in the windows and doorways of houses all over the city—a blue star on the flag for every member of the family on active duty, a gold star for any family member who had been killed in action.

With the nation at war and people consumed with the great struggle between the Allies and the Axis Powers, the complex problems of Boston politics were temporarily obscured by the exigencies of national survival. And yet the deteriorating condition of the city was too critical to be completely overlooked. With a growing deficit, an unbalanced budget, alarmingly high taxes, an inability to attract either government funding or private investment, and a constant state of warfare between the Irish-Catholic political system and the Yankee-Protestant financial establishment, Boston was clearly in trouble. Even the most optimistic observer would have to conclude that once the terrible war was over, the city's future did not look very promising.

BOOK FOUR

A New Boston



10

Building a New City

IN THE midst of the climactic events of World War II, Boston politics went through some bewildering convolutions. Maurice Tobin, in the third year of his second four-year term as mayor of Boston, suddenly announced that he intended to enter the 1944 race for governor. After defeating the Republican candidate in November, he moved from City Hall on School Street to the State House on Beacon Hill, leaving the mayor's office to be filled by city council president John E. Kerrigan as acting mayor until a regular election could be held in November 1945. While these bizarre events were taking place, James Michael Curley suddenly reappeared on the local scene. In 1942 he had won a seat in the U.S. Congress from the Charlestown-Cambridge eleventh district. Halfway through his term in Washington, however, he announced that he would return to Boston to become a candidate for mayor in the 1945 election.

By the time the Allies defeated Germany in April 1945 and the explosion of the atomic bombs ended the war with Japan in August, preparations for the Boston mayoral election were taking place against the backdrop of a collapsing fiscal structure. The Bethlehem shipyards in East Boston and the Fore River shipyards in Quincy were already closing down; the South Boston army base

was cutting back operations. War contracts were being canceled; the machine and tooling industries were conducting substantial layoffs; inflation kept rising higher and higher. Without effective municipal leadership, imaginative coalitions, or outside assistance of any kind, the city's aging infrastructure continued to crumble, and the housing stock deteriorated at a rapid pace. Boston's once-famous seaport facilities had fallen into disuse, its rolling stock rusted on abandoned railroad yards, and a discouraging number of businesses were leaving the city for other parts of the country where taxes were lower, labor cheaper, and the political climate more congenial. According to the *Boston Globe*, Boston had become "a hopeless backwater, a tumbled-down has-been among cities." John Collins, a future mayor, recalled that there was a kind of "malaise of spirit" at the time. "We were all kind of ashamed."

It was this overwhelming sense of anxiety and insecurity that brought so much attention to Boston politics as the war came to an end. True to his word, James Michael Curley left Washington, returned to Boston, and defeated Johnny Kerrigan in November 1945 to embark on his fourth term as mayor of Boston. Curley's victory was all the more remarkable because it took place while he was under indictment by a federal grand jury on charges of using the mails to defraud. Taking more than a year to exhaust all his judicial appeals, in June 1947 Curley was finally sentenced to a term of six to eighteen months in the federal penitentiary at Danbury, Connecticut—once again putting Boston in the awkward position of having a vacant office in City Hall. In an effort to maintain a semblance of administrative continuity, Republican governor Robert Bradford appointed the city clerk, John B. Hynes, as temporary mayor until Curley returned from prison.

One day before Thanksgiving 1947, five months after he first entered Danbury prison, James Michael Curley's sentence was commuted by President Harry S. Truman. After receiving a hero's welcome at Boston's Back Bay Station, Curley spent Thanksgiving day with his family at their Jamaicaaway home, and then showed up the next day at City Hall, where he was greeted by hundreds of friends and well-wishers. Ready to pick up where he left off, Curley spent the next several hours in his office reviewing correspondence, interviewing job candidates, and signing contracts. When his day's work was done, he emerged from his office and boasted expansively to the waiting reporters: "I have accomplished more in one day than has been done in the five months of my absence." With a wave of his hand, he was out the door.

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While Curley undoubtedly considered his offhand remark typical of the kind of humorous response the media expected, John B. Hynes regarded Curley's parting comment as an insulting reflection on his hard work as acting mayor. In a blaze of anger, the usually mild-mannered city clerk decided to put his name in for the next mayoral race, in November 1949. Calling upon his many friends and associates, he began creating a political organization to challenge one of the most charismatic big-city mayors in the United States. From all points of view it looked like an unlikely David-and-Goliath contest, with a challenger who had never run for elective office in his life, had no political machine, and had no war chest at all. Even Curley himself could not take it seriously, scoffing at the idea that he could be beaten by a contender he referred to as "that little city clerk."

There are several historical factors, however, that help explain why Hynes's seemingly Quixotic challenge was not quite as reckless as it first appeared. For one thing, Curley's days were already numbered. "Young Jim," as his devoted followers like to call him, was now in his mid-seventies, showing the unmistakable ravages of illness and old age. The golden voice had lost its vibrancy, and one had only to look at the rheumy eyes and sunken cheeks to recognize the fact that he would not be on the political scene much longer. It was a time, too, when Curley's centralized and highly personalized system of patronage had been severely undermined by the legacy of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal legislation. Such measures as social security, unemployment compensation, workmen's compensation, and the extensive benefits provided by the G.I. Bill of Rights encouraged citizens to become much more dependent on the bottomless largesse of federal agencies than on the limited handouts of city bosses. All over America, big-city bosses like James Michael Curley were becoming political dinosaurs.

Finally, by 1948, many of the old Boston neighborhoods, which had supplied such solid and unwavering support for men like Curley, were losing both their political clout and their ethnic distinctiveness. Sons and daughters of families that had now been in America for two or three generations had lost touch with their ethnic roots and were all but impervious to old neighborhood appeals. In ever-increasing numbers, young families were leaving three-deckers in such communities as Charlestown, Dorchester, East Boston, and South Boston and moving to new split-level ranch houses in the suburbs. Statistics showed clearly that the population of Boston was declining at an alarming rate. In 1950, the

population of the city was recorded at over eight hundred thousand; over the course of the next ten years, it would drop to less than seven hundred thousand—with no sign of leveling off.

But Curley's weaknesses were not the only reason the upcoming election of 1949 would be much closer than expected. Hynes, too, had certain political advantages that became clearer as the campaign progressed. Not only could he call upon his old friends, neighbors, and cronies, but he could also draw upon the support of a wide range of city employees, newspaper reporters, and local politicians he had come to know during his many years as city clerk. Former backers of Maurice Tobin, particularly, saw in Hynes a political figure with many of the more urbane characteristics they had admired in their former candidate, who was now Secretary of Labor in the Truman administration. Especially noticeable among those who gathered around the Hynes banner were a number of young war veterans, many of whom were participating in a city election for the first time. Better educated, less parochial, and more sophisticated in their political idealism, they were clearly ready for a new style of political leadership that would bring honesty and integrity to a city that had acquired a reputation for graft and corruption. Seeing the advantage of cultivating a whole new generation of Boston voters, Hynes persuaded a young law school graduate named Jerome Rappaport to organize Students for Hynes, a group that drew in young men and women from neighboring colleges and universities. Although they might not be able to vote in the 1949 election, after writing newsletters, handing out leaflets, and registering voters, they might well become dedicated "Hynes people" by the time the next election came around.

There were other voting blocks, too, that Hynes was able to use in order to help distinguish his campaign from that of Curley. Capitalizing on a groundswell of dissatisfaction among elements of the community that had been generally neglected by the prevailing system, Hynes drew together a broad-based coalition of reform-minded, middle-class Irish, Jewish, and Italian voters, as well as a number of representatives of the African-American community in the South End–Roxbury district who also felt ignored by the Curley machine. The woman's vote, too, became a conscious factor in the new organization's planning, as it had three years earlier, in 1946, when young Jack Kennedy ran for a seat in the U.S. Congress from the famous eleventh district. "Women compose the majority of votes now," he told a meeting of the League of Catholic Women. "Women not only have political power, but they have financial power." And the Kennedy women played it to the hilt. At VFW posts, at Legion halls, at house

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parties, at tea parties in hotels, and at receptions in churches, his sisters Eunice and Pat proved resourceful and effective campaigners. And Jack's mother, Rose Kennedy, was always in demand wherever she went. "Rose was so important to Jack in 1946," recalled Dave Powers, "because she was better known than anyone else in that district." Following a similar pattern, John Hynes and the members of his family held Sunday afternoon tea parties in the parlors of private homes and small public halls to cultivate the interests of young housewives and working women, promising them that he would "restore Boston's good name and reputation." And even members of the downtown Yankee business and financial establishment showed tentative signs of support for Hynes. Few of them would ever lift a finger on behalf of their old nemesis, James Michael Curley, but several of them who had earlier supported Maurice Tobin—people such as Robert Cutler, Henry Shattuck, Stuart Rand, and Henry Parkman—could certainly see Hynes as the lesser of two evils.

The election of 1949, therefore, proved to be a hard-fought contest, and one that was much closer than observers had originally predicted. Curley continued to emphasize his long political experience, his ability to get things done, and his promises to rebuild the city. Hynes, on the other hand, played cleverly on Curley's age and the inability of his "tired and forlorn" administration to accomplish anything. He called upon voters to come over to his side and end the division in the city that had proved to be a "dismal failure." Curley reminded voters that "CURLEY GETS THINGS DONE"; Hynes urged voters to "RESTORE BOSTON'S GOOD NAME."

As the newspapers predicted, the turnout on November 8, 1949, was large, the race close, and the contest fought right down to the wire. When the final vote was tallied, Hynes had 138,700 votes—the largest ever won by any mayoral candidate in the city's history—while Curley came in second with 126,042, the largest vote in the old warrior's long political career. Despite the closeness of the outcome, many people sensed that something significant had taken place. "The decision rendered yesterday by the voters of the city of Boston," commented the *Boston Globe*, "marks the end of one era and the beginning of another."

Throughout his campaign against Curley, Hynes had emphasized the theme of a reformed and reconstructed "New Boston." He promised to restore Boston's "good name and reputation," and he assured voters that he would eliminate the "arrogance, waste, and inefficiency" that had for so long characterized operations at City Hall. In light of the Curley legacy, however, the question

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was whether the new mayor would be able to carry out his campaign promises. Could he possibly break down the social and religious rivalries that had divided the city for generations? Could he form new alliances between the city's political leaders and its business executives? Could he bring in funding from the federal government and investments from outside corporations? Could he renew the infrastructure of an old and battered city? In short, was such a thing as a "New Boston" possible?

At first glance, the odds seemed decidedly against the fifty-three-year-old Hynes. Despite his carefully groomed white hair, rimless glasses, good manners, and bankerlike appearance, there was little indication that he was different from any other typical Irish-Catholic politician. He had been born in Boston's South End, of immigrant parents, and later moved to Dorchester, where he spent



Mayor John B. Hynes poses at the controls of a wrecking crane at Seneca Street to start a \$4.3 million project to convert the New York Streets area of Boston's South End into light industrial and commercial use. Congressman John W. McCormack stands by the mayor's side, while members of the Boston City Council and representatives of the city's business community look on. *Courtesy of the Boston Public Library, Print Department.*

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the rest of his life. At the age of fourteen John went to work for the telephone company and attended night school at Dorchester High, where he learned stenography and other business subjects. After serving briefly in World War I, he received an appointment as a stenographer at City Hall, then gradually worked his way up to become chief clerk in the office of Mayor Curley. After taking courses at Suffolk Law School, Hynes passed the bar in 1927, got married, and began raising a family. After he returned from a brief period of service in World War II, he was appointed to city clerk. A quiet, gentle, and compassionate man who attended Mass every morning and telephoned his wife every noon, he met regularly with members of the press every afternoon at four o'clock. A virtually unknown bureaucrat who had never held elective office, the new man inherited an entrenched municipal bureaucracy perpetuated for decades by personal power and extensive patronage. It was very difficult to see how Hynes could possibly emerge from the shadow of Curley and become his own man.

Gradually, however, John B. Hynes began to acquire a standing and a reputation in his own right that brought him respect and recognition. Among the growing number of middle-class and upper-middle-class Irish-American families in the city who were ready to dispense with the steady diet of ethnic rivalry and class animosity that had been served up to them for so long by their older political leaders, Hynes seemed like a voice of reason. Young people graduating from college and servicemen returning from military life were often embarrassed by the boisterous rhetoric and outmoded antics of the old-time bosses. The time had come for a new man to bring a new respectability to Boston politics and do something to restore the city's battered reputation.

After his inauguration, Hynes also impressed members of the city's business community by making a number of highly publicized changes in the city's overgrown administrative structure. Drawing on his long experience with the municipal bureaucracy, he was able to eliminate a number of departments and substantially reorganize several others. Slowly, conservative business leaders became aware of the fact that Hynes was much more in the "accommodationist" tradition of such earlier Irish mayors as Hugh O'Brien and Patrick Collins than in the "confrontationist" mode of "Honey Fitz" and Jim Curley. This might well be the type of "acceptable" Irish politician with whom they could work. Furthermore, there were no signs that Hynes was anxious to rekindle old ethnic antagonisms, to set the needs of the neighborhoods against the interests of the central city, or to employ the old divisive political tactics of pitting Catholics against Protestants. His political appeal was for a new coalition in which the

formerly diverse and hostile elements could somehow be brought together to work for the benefit of the city as a whole.

Demonstrating that his initial victory in 1949 was no political accident, Hynes defeated Curley a second time in a special election in 1951, after the old 1909 charter had been changed by what was called the Plan A system. The size of the city council was reduced to only nine members, elected at large, and a September primary was established, which would reduce the number of mayoral contestants to two with a final election in November. Hynes won a third term in 1955 in a hard-fought campaign in which he beat the first attempt by state senator John E. Powers of South Boston to move into the mayor's office. John B. Hynes would serve a total of ten years as mayor of Boston, the longest continuous tenure in the city's history up to that point.

Certainly a factor that must also have played an important but subtle role in changing the political atmosphere in the city at this particular time was the emergence in 1945 of Archbishop Richard J. Cushing as the spiritual leader of Boston's substantial Catholic population. A crusty and completely unpredictable cleric from South Boston—gruff, affable, and down-to-earth—Cushing contrasted sharply with his rather pompous and autocratic predecessor, Cardinal William H. O'Connell, who had dominated the local religious scene for the past thirty years. Breezy and extroverted, the new archbishop welcomed publicity, courted photographers, played with children, mingled with all sorts of people from the very rich to the very poor, and generally showed a remarkable grasp of the potential of the modern media to dramatize his policies and publicize his goals.

But Cushing was more than just a new man in town with a charismatic personality and an effective public relations campaign. He was genuinely interested in defining a new level of human and spiritual relations in an archdiocese that heretofore had not been particularly tolerant toward those who were new or "different." Attuned to the interests of second- and third-generation Americans of Irish, Italian, and German descent who were born, raised, and educated in the United States, he worked in the current spirit of ecumenism, pledging to refrain from "all arguments with our non-Catholic neighbors and from all purely defensive talk about Catholics." Cushing unceremoniously knocked aside many of the barriers that, for so long, had separated his Catholic parishioners from their non-Catholic neighbors. By the time he was raised to the rank of Cardinal by Pope John XXIII in 1958, Cushing had already anticipated many of the changes that would come with the Second Vatican Council. He

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was preaching to Protestant gatherings, speaking before Jewish audiences, and generally working to promote feelings of fellowship and good will among large numbers of ethnic and religious groups in the Greater Boston area.*

Coincidentally, but significantly, the new archbishop's ecumenical approach during the 1950s and 1960s was also clearly in tune with the political exhortations of Mayor Hynes, who was urging the citizens of Boston to put aside their differences and work together for the renewal and reconstruction of the city. To have the prestigious religious leader of the community voicing the same humanitarian ideals and moral sentiments as the city's political leader could not help creating a new and healthier climate in which fundamental improvements could finally take place.

By managing to convey an air of personal integrity and administrative ability, John Hynes established closer and more familiar ties with members of the downtown Republican community. He made some carefully calculated appointments of well-known Bostonians to boards of trustees, to planning boards, and to professional commissions. For the first time in most people's memory, the mayor met with business executives, consulted with financiers, listened to bankers, and formed special committees to give him advice about difficult decisions. "Building bridges with the local business community was one area where Hynes really made a contribution to the city's future development," one municipal director later recalled. In this way, Hynes was gradually able to pull together into a working coalition the two most hostile elements of Boston politics. Protestant-Brahmin Republicans now indicated a willingness to extend to Hynes both the political legitimacy and the financial cooperation they had so long denied James Michael Curley. Irish-Catholic Democrats, in turn, demonstrated a willingness to work with the Yankee establishment on the basis of equality and respect.

Anxious to display his capacity for dealing with urban reconstruction, as well as responding to the city's pressing need for low-income housing, Mayor Hynes directed the Boston Housing Authority (BHA) to create a number of public housing projects in several working-class neighborhoods. The Fidelis Way project in Brighton (1950), the Cathedral project in the South End (1951), the Bromley-Heath project in Jamaica Plain (1954), the Franklin Field project

* Cardinal Cushing developed close personal friendships with members of Boston's Jewish community and boasted that his own brother-in-law, a man he praised as "a devoted husband" and "a great example to me," was Jewish.

in Dorchester (1954), and the enormous Columbia Point project just outside South Boston (1954) were only a few of the dozen new housing projects that were calculated to reduce both demographic pressures and social tensions. Although most of these socially isolated and racially segregated projects would later be judged as unmitigated disasters, at the time they were welcomed as much-needed housing for poor and low-income families.

Evidence of how the changing image of the new mayor produced tangible results came in the spring of 1952, when Hynes learned that the Prudential Insurance Company was looking for a site, somewhere in the northeast, for a regional office. The mayor immediately offered Prudential the twenty-eight acres of abandoned Boston & Albany railroad yards in the Back Bay section, between Boylston Street and Huntington Avenue, as a site for its prospective office building. Although negotiations between the city and Prudential would drag on interminably for many years over questions of location, property valuation, and tax assessments, the very fact that an outside corporation would even think of coming to Boston was the first tangible sign that the city's new image was beginning to attract positive attention.

For the first time, too, Hynes was able to elicit the support and cooperation of several leading colleges and universities in the Greater Boston area that had contributed painfully little to the city's progress and well-being. Specialists from Harvard began working on a variety of economic studies and financial reports; engineers and urban planners from MIT involved themselves in architectural designs and much-needed transportation reports; and in 1954 Boston College, under the direction of the Reverend W. Seavey Joyce, S.J., established a series of Boston Citizen Seminars that provided a valuable forum for the public discussion of many of Boston's most pressing problems. Indeed, it was at a Citizen Seminar on October 26, 1954, that Hynes delivered the opening address, "Boston, Whither Goest Thou," in which he laid out his remarkable vision of a completely transformed and modernized "New Boston." If the city could form an effective coalition of government and business leaders, readjust its tax system, and put its economy on a solid footing, said Hynes, then it could clear its slums, revitalize its neighborhoods, rebuild its downtown business district, and build a modern highway system. With those things accomplished, Boston could then go on and create a Back Bay Center to rival New York City's Rockefeller Center; construct a major "convention hall-auditorium" to attract large conventions to Boston; establish a World Trade Center that would restore the city's commercial legacy; construct a Government Center with a new

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municipal office building; and build a second harbor tunnel to East Boston and Logan Airport.

Encouraged by the positive responses he received to his ideas about urban renewal, Hynes and his advisors used Pittsburgh as a model of how a working coalition—consisting of an active big-city mayor (David L. Lawrence) and a group of determined business leaders—could work together to plan a successful urban reconstruction program. Returning to Boston after a visit to Pittsburgh, Hynes worked with Boston banks and a variety of federal funding agencies during the prosperous years of the Eisenhower administration to begin renewing the face of a badly scarred city. He established an Auditorium Commission to undertake the design of a multipurpose auditorium and convention center; a short time later he created a Government Center Commission to plan an expansive area in the old Scollay Square district for municipal office buildings. After inaugurating programs of slum clearance in several neighborhoods, in 1957 Hynes established the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), which undertook the demolition of old tenement houses in the New York Streets area of the South End to make way for light industrial and commercial uses.

In 1958, Hynes launched an even more ambitious program of urban renewal, this time directed at the West End, one of Boston's oldest communities. Consecutive waves of immigrants—Irish, Italians, Jews, Greeks, Armenians, Poles, Russians—had turned the neighborhood into a seething and colorful melting pot that at one point was home to as many as twenty-three thousand residents. Despite the congestion, or perhaps because of it, most inhabitants of the West End regarded their neighborhood as a warm, friendly, and familiar community in which to live and raise their children. "The West End was beautiful and unique," recalled one former resident. "One of the city's crimes against itself is that the West End's narrow and mysterious European streets and alleys are not there for the old men to walk, for me to walk, for everyone else to walk."

As far as younger, more liberal, and more professional observers were concerned, however, the West End was an impoverished, overcrowded, and dangerous slum area that should be wiped out as soon as possible. With a closely packed population that was susceptible to contagious epidemics such as polio, and with those "mysterious European streets" so narrow that fire engines could not reach a conflagration, social scientists regarded the West End as a disaster waiting to happen. The BRA declared that the area was "so clearly substandard" that the only solution was a "sweeping clearance of buildings."

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A photograph by Robert Severy in 1963 shows the extensive demolition taking place in the West End, with the Hotel Madison and the Boston Garden in the background. Except for the Old West Church, the first Harrison Gray Otis house, Saint Joseph's Church, the Charles Street jail, and the Massachusetts General Hospital, no other building was left standing in the entire fifty-two-acre neighborhood. *Courtesy of the Bostonian Society/Old State House.*

Despite belated protests and last-minute appeals, the wrecking crews were soon demolishing houses, tearing down tenements, bulldozing entire city blocks, and thoughtlessly evicting residents. Most of them were poor, many of them immigrants and refugees, and the city had made no adequate provisions for alternative housing for them. Although a few important historic sites such as the Old West Church and the first Harrison Gray Otis House were fortunately rescued from destruction at the last minute, the rest of the West End was completely obliterated. It was sacrificed to the misplaced technology of those who believed that this part of Boston would be better off with high-rise luxury apartments, modern shopping centers, massive garages, and sprawling parking lots that would attract "quality shoppers" back from the suburbs to a new and modernized downtown Boston.

Although the West End Development Plan had become an accomplished fact, the totality of the destruction and the ruthlessness with which it had

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been carried out engendered such bitter feelings that the future of any further urban renewal projects in Boston was very much in doubt. Residents of other sections of the inner city and of the outlying neighborhoods became so terrified at what had happened to the people of the West End that they determined not to allow the bureaucrats, the technocrats, and the real estate developers destroy their communities and displace their people. "Not in my neighborhood!" became the battle cry of those who opposed any more urban renewal programs.

By the time Mayor John B. Hynes's final administration was coming to an end in 1959, it was clear that any further urban renewal plans would either have to be given up completely or radically redesigned with greater concern for the welfare of the residents of the communities. There were many Bostonians, however, who felt that the results of the upcoming mayoral election might well bring an end to urban renewal completely. With the clear understanding that Hynes would not run for another term in November 1959, it was generally conceded that John E. Powers, then president of the Massachusetts Senate, would succeed Hynes. A short, energetic, and widely recognized political leader from South Boston's Ward 6, Powers was a well-known expert on parliamentary procedure who had the labor vote solidly behind him, the support of most of the Boston newspapers, and the personal friendship of Cardinal Cushing. Powers's only serious opposition came from John Collins of Jamaica Plain, who had served in the house and the senate as well as on the Boston city council before being appointed Suffolk County Register of Probate, virtually a lifetime position that ordinarily offered few opportunities for political advancement. At first glance, Collins appeared to be a political lightweight and a career bureaucrat who offered little competition; Powers's election seemed assured.

There were, however, several factors that operated in Collins's favor. First, there is little doubt that his courageous comeback from a crippling bout with polio in 1955, much in the tradition of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, created a measure of both sympathy and respect that worked to his political advantage. Second, at a time when television was becoming an influential factor in American politics (the famous Kennedy-Nixon television debates were less than a year away), Collins was able to convey to the voters a clean-cut, wholesome, nonpolitical image. As one commentator expressed it, Collins came across with "the carefree sunny charm of a curly-haired parochial choir boy grown older." Powers, by contrast, came across to the viewing public as a tough, arrogant, old-time machine politician out of the Curley era. And last, Collins

and his campaign managers were able to capitalize effectively on this contrast of personalities, presenting Collins as an honest, efficient, nonpartisan manager in the style of John B. Hynes, while attacking Powers as a “little Napoleon” and a tool of the worst elements of Boston’s political and criminal society. No better indication of the Collins approach can be found than the cleverly designed posters and newspaper advertisements that called on the voters to “STOP POWER POLITICS” while holding out the prospect of what Collins labeled a “New Boston.”

In perhaps the biggest upset in Boston’s political history, John Collins defeated Johnny Powers for mayor by twenty-four thousand votes. Since neither economic, ethnic, nor religious considerations played a part in the eventual outcome (both Powers and Collins were white, middle-class, Irish-Catholic Democrats), one can only assume that the Boston electorate continued to favor an essentially “nonpolitical” candidate who had no visible attachments to any machine organization, as opposed to a clearly “political” candidate whose candidacy smacked too much of the old Curley regime.

In his inaugural address on January 4, 1960, John Collins emphasized that his goal was not simply to keep the city alive, but to revitalize it. “We must restore, rebuild, and redevelop,” he said. As a basis for such a program, he emphasized two particular issues that confronted his administration: the rising costs of city government, and the rising property tax rates. Both these problems had to be dealt with before he could turn to the subject of urban renewal.

In preparing to undertake extensive financial decisions and cost-cutting techniques, Collins turned to a small but powerful group of Boston business leaders who had formed an organization known as the Boston Coordinating Committee, more familiarly known as “The Vault.” During the final year of Hynes’s term, the business community feared that the growing tax rate, increased expenditures, and ambitious bond issues would force the city into bankruptcy and receivership. To prepare for such an eventuality, Ralph Lowell of the Boston Safe Deposit and Trust Company, Charles Coolidge of Ropes and Gray, Gerald Blakely of Cabot Cabot and Forbes, Lloyd Brace of the First National Bank, Paul Clark of John Hancock, Carl Gilbert of Gillette’s, and several other prominent businessmen met in a boardroom near the vault (hence “The Vault”) of Lowell’s bank on Franklin Street to prepare emergency measures. Although the finances of the city proved to be in better shape than expected, the group continued to hold its meetings even after the mayoral election. Once he took office, John Collins consulted with members of The

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Vault for professional advice concerning such technical matters as reorganizing the city's assessing department and computerizing complicated tax records. As time went on, however, every two weeks at four o'clock, the mayor would meet with the members of The Vault for advice and assistance concerning the broader issues involving urban renewal. The close association that developed between the mayor of Boston and influential leaders of the city's business and financial establishments would go far in providing the kind of stability needed for any further progress on the physical development of the city.

From the outset, John Collins was determined to develop a successful program of urban renewal that would create a truly "New Boston" for which he would become famous. The lessons from the West End debacle were not lost on Collins, and it was clear that if he expected public support he would have to come up with a plan that was professionally engineered, adequately funded, and humanely administered. It was with these goals in mind that he selected as his director a thirty-nine-year-old man named Edward J. Logue, who had shown energy and imagination in running the urban renewal program in New Haven, Connecticut. Logue arrived in Boston in March 1960 as a consultant and, after an initial survey of the city, concluded that except for several individual projects, there was, for all practical purposes, "no overall plan or program to change the city, and certainly no public or civic organization equipped to do it." On the basis of his studies, Logue presented to the mayor a comprehensive development plan, which Collins publicly announced on September 22, 1960, as his "Ninety Million Dollar Development Program for Boston." This was an ambitious program to rebuild the city under ten separate plans encompassing not only downtown Boston, but also most of the surrounding neighborhoods. Conscious of the frightening West End experience, Collins assured voters that the program would be planned in consultation "with the people who live in these communities." He would take a "rehabilitation" approach, he promised, instead of resorting to the "bulldozer."

For the next three months, Logue and his staff organized plans, studied documents, compiled statistics, and made out applications to the federal government for enough money to get the large-scale operation off the ground "at one crack." The work paid off: the Urban Renewal Administration agreed to allocate nearly \$30 million for Collins's development program. On January 25, 1961, after a bitter fight among board members, Edward J. Logue was chosen administrator of the BRA and given extraordinary powers. He was responsible only to the mayor and to the BRA board, could develop and execute

comprehensive plans for the city, and could hire and fire his own staff members. Collins had the man he wanted, invested with all the powers necessary to put his urban renewal program into effect.

Before launching any new programs of his own, however, Logue pushed for completion of such pending projects as the Prudential Center, the Convention Center, and the Government Center, whose effective completion, he felt, would not only put the new Collins administration on a sound footing, but also inspire public confidence in developing future projects. "Getting Prudential Center built," he later wrote, "was essential if any of our other plans were to go forward."

At the time Collins took office in January 1960, plans for the Prudential Center had become stalled after an agreement by Mayor Hynes granting Prudential special tax considerations was struck down as unconstitutional by the state's Supreme Judicial Court. For the next few months, city and state agencies worked feverishly but ineffectually to come up with a tax arrangement that would satisfy Prudential but still pass constitutional muster with the court. Logue finally cut the knot by declaring that the Back Bay site qualified as a "blighted area" under the federal definition and could be placed under the authority of the BRA as a public project, instead of being handled as a private enterprise. Once the Court agreed that the new arrangement was not unconstitutional, construction of the new Prudential complex proceeded rapidly. Designed by architect Charles Luckman and heavily influenced by the work of Swiss architect Le Corbusier, the main tower of the Prudential building, constructed of glass and steel, sat on a concrete platform and rose some 743 feet—fifty-two stories—into the air. As one BRA official later reflected: "The Prudential Center was conceived in the fifties to give a new, slick, shiny image that would attract new developers."

It was during the same early months of 1960 that another long-standing project—an underground garage—came back to life. Although it had been agreed back in 1950 that a garage would be constructed underneath Boston Common, the work was just getting under way when John Collins took office as mayor. Despite protests from the residents of Beacon Hill and Charles Street about the noise, the dust, and the "earthquake tremors" of the pile drivers, the three-level structure was finally completed just before Thanksgiving 1961. The new garage not only added some much-needed parking spaces in the city, but also provided more convenient access to the downtown retail district. In the months following construction, Boston newspaper readers were treated to

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colorful and juicy scandals involving charges of graft and corruption in the construction process.

While the Prudential Center and the underground garage were under construction, the Collins administration turned its attention to the Government Center project slated for the Scollay Square area. After prolonged negotiations succeeded in persuading federal and state agencies to commit themselves to the construction of administration buildings on the site, BRA director Edward Logue acquired the property rights to the Scollay Square district. In February 1962, the bulldozers came rumbling in, property owners were moved out, and the wrecking ball smashed down one block after another. Only at the last minute were prominent Bostonians like Walter Muir Whitehill able to rescue the historic Sears Crescent from demolition, persuading Logue to incorporate the building's curved, redbrick structure into the overall design of the project.

From the outset, the centerpiece of the Government Center was to be a new \$30 million City Hall, set prominently in a broad open space. In November 1960, a national competition for the design of this structure was announced, and a unanimous decision was made in favor of three young members of the Columbia University architectural school—Gerhard Kallman, Noel McKinnell, and Edward Knowles. With great ceremony, the public unveiling of the new design took place on May 3, 1962, at the Museum of Fine Arts. When the curtain was lifted, viewers saw not the traditional, colonial-type structure many had expected, but instead a strikingly modernistic design, low and huge, with what Whitehill described as “Mycenaean or Aztec overtones” in its soaring massiveness. Neither then, nor since, have there been any neutral feelings about Boston's new City Hall. People either love it fervently or hate it passionately. It looks like “the crate that Faneuil Hall came in,” remarked one disappointed observer. But there was no turning back. Despite the storm of controversy, Collins and Logue accepted the new design for City Hall and pushed ahead with their plans for the Government Center.

Although disagreements over the new structure's architectural shape would continue well into the future, the decision to create a Government Center in the heart of the city had important ramifications. With Boston serving as the location not only of its own city hall, but also of the state capital, as well as the federal government's New England regional headquarters, government increased its role as the region's major employer. The creation of a special Government Center in Boston assured that billions of dollars of economic

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The design for Boston's new City Hall was unveiled on May 3, 1962, at the Museum of Fine Arts. Developed by architects from the Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, the structure immediately provoked a storm of controversy. Supporters insisted that it was a major work of design, symbolizing the transformation of Boston from a colonial seaport town to a modern metropolis. Critics complained that the extreme modernistic design was totally inappropriate for a city with Boston's historical past. *Courtesy of the Bostonian Society/Old State House.*

activity would not be scattered across the commonwealth. According to Boston economist Barry Bluestone, no other city had such a wide range of government employment concentrated in such a way as to drive the whole regional economy.

There was a rising tide of excitement in response to Boston's urban renewal projects that led a number of private investors to begin participating in the process. In December 1959, New York real estate developer Jerome Rappaport was awarded the contract to build on the demolished forty-six-acre site of the old West End. With the construction of the fashionable Charles River Park complex—featuring expensive townhouses and luxury apartments designed expressly to attract well-to-do tenants from the suburbs—the ethnic working-class character of the old West End was changed forever. As the Prudential tower and the massive War Memorial Auditorium (later renamed the Hynes Auditorium) went up on the site of the old railroad yards along lower Boylston Street, the Sheraton Corporation began construction of a twenty-nine-story

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hotel. Located directly behind the Prudential project, the First Church of Christ Scientist also caught the “contagion of improvement” and in 1963 sought assistance from the BRA in improving its surroundings. The church launched an ambitious construction program that included administration buildings, apartment complexes, merchandise marts, and a seven hundred-foot-long reflecting pool that lit up the approaches to Massachusetts Avenue and Symphony Hall. In the old South Cove area below Chinatown, the Tufts–New England Medical Center transformed a rundown section of the city into a major center of medical and dental research; in Copley Square, the John Hancock Insurance Company erected a spectacular glass-faced sixty-story office building across from Trinity Church. And in the new Government Center area, developer Norman B. Leventhal’s Beacon Construction Company started work on a three-part, crescent-shaped commercial structure (One, Two, and Three Center Plaza) that separated Government Center from the Suffolk County Courthouse in Pemberton Square. One by one, a number of banks, trust companies, law firms, and insurance agencies constructed a series of expensive, high-rise office buildings in the area of Washington Street and State Street, bringing both money and confidence to the “New Boston.”

The new construction in downtown Boston, substantial funding from Washington, and serious investment by outside companies—all tangible signs of progress and prosperity—gave Mayor Collins great personal satisfaction as well as professional pride. In June 1963, he announced that he would be a candidate for reelection to a second term as mayor of Boston and called on voters to retain him in office for another four years “so that together we may complete the job we have started.” On November 5, 1963, Collins swept the boards, taking nineteen of the city’s twenty-two wards, and defeating his rival, Gabriel Piemonte, by a plurality of 34,775 votes. With such an obvious vote of confidence, it seemed as though John Collins could look forward to another four years in office, during which he could complete his comprehensive program for a truly “New Boston.”

The initial focus of Collins’s Ninety Million Dollar Development Program was on projects in the downtown area—the Prudential Center, the War Memorial Auditorium, the Government Center—attracting federal funds, encouraging local investment, and bringing in outside developers. The long-range ambition of the program, however, was to extend many of the same urban renewal techniques into the various neighborhoods that surrounded the central city. It would be awkward for Collins to boast about his beautiful

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Determined to make the New Boston the centerpiece of his administration, Mayor John F. Collins brought young Edward J. Logue up from New Haven, Connecticut, to take over the planning and execution of the city's urban renewal program. Collins (seated) watches Logue use a pointer to describe to a group of professional builders the plans for a hundred-acre waterfront development project. In the left foreground is the Fan Pier, which is currently under development. *Courtesy of the Boston Public Library, Print Department.*

"New Boston" when the refurbished downtown area was still hemmed in by a series of old neighborhoods, generally populated by blue-collar families living in two- and three-story wooden houses and by people of color occupying run-down tenements and shabby rooming houses. The city's new program was designed to transform these valuable locations into clusters of attractive and income-producing communities with the kind of shiny new townhouses and modern apartments that would bring middle-class families and well-to-do professionals back to the city.

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The question, of course, was where to begin. Appalled by what had happened to the poor residents of the old West End, neighborhood leaders were on guard against similar intrusions by politicians, real estate developers, and “social engineers” who would knock down their houses, displace their people, and disrupt their traditional way of life. For this reason, Collins and Logue did not attempt to bring their urban renewal program into either South Boston or East Boston, both of which had vocal representatives in the Boston city council who were openly hostile to the idea of urban renewal. Taking the path of least political resistance, therefore, Logue and the BRA directed their efforts to areas like Charlestown and Allston-Brighton, neither of which had a representative on the city council. In both cases, however, longtime residents—“townies” as they were called—rose up in angry protest against the plans of “outsiders” to tear down their old houses and replace them with fashionable housing developments with rents the locals could never afford. Although Collins, Logue, and the BRA eventually succeeded in accomplishing many of their projects, the result was a growing and bitter antagonism between Irish-Catholic residents of the neighborhoods and the Irish-Catholic politicians who ran city government.

Feeling themselves caught between the influence of municipal authorities and the greed of urban developers, neighborhood residents responded by taking over control of their own districts. They organized political action groups to plan their own civic improvements and to force city authorities to consult with neighborhood representatives before taking any action that might endanger their communities. Local groups defeated plans to construct a multilane “Southwest Corridor” through Roxbury, fought against plans to expand Logan Airport, and prevented the increase of medical institutions in the Mission Hill district. As Mayor Collins’s second four-year term drew to a close, community-based groups were well on their way to becoming an important political force that would have to be reckoned with by candidates in the 1967 mayoral election.

Growing conflict between local political groups in the white ethnic neighborhoods was not the only political complication facing John F. Collins in the last two years of his term as mayor. A rising tide of anger and discontent in the African-American community also presented the beginnings of a new political force in Boston’s history. At first, a number of the city’s prominent African-American leaders—such as Otto and Muriel Snowden, political representative Royal Bolling, Jr., and attorney Clarence Elam—welcomed the revitalization and modernization of their multiracial South End community that they felt

urban renewal would bring. In a very short time, however, as the BRA moved in with bulldozers and steam shovels to smash their old wood-frame houses to splinters and reduce many of their brick houses to what one resident called “clouds of rubble,” residents quickly became disenchanted with the process. They concluded that the real object of the BRA program was to take their property, evict their multicultural people—African Americans, Puerto Ricans, Hispanics, Eastern Europeans, and poor people—and build high-rent, fashionable apartments for those members of the “white gentry” who wanted to live close to the city.

Resolved to take matters into their own hands, during the mid-1960s a diverse group of ministers, poverty-program employees, social workers, and community organizers formed political action groups to oppose the BRA, halt further demolition, and push for more subsidized housing. At the same time, a new wave of younger and more assertive black community activists began speaking out against Mayor Collins, accusing his administration of ignoring the basic needs of poor black people living in what the local black newspaper called “the worst slum conditions in Massachusetts.” Early in 1966, a group of Roxbury welfare mothers staged a sit-in at Mayor Collins’s office at City Hall on School Street, demanding action against the unsanitary conditions in which they were forced to live. On another occasion, a group of Roxbury residents dumped a huge pile of trash and garbage on the front steps of City Hall to protest inadequate sanitation services in the black community. As Mayor John B. Collins was preparing to leave office after his two terms as mayor, Boston’s African-American residents were making it clear that they were not convinced city government was doing enough to meet their basic needs: health care, low-income housing, employment opportunities, and better schools. The opening years of the new mayoral administration in Boston were already being shaped by political forces in white ethnic neighborhoods as well as in the black community that were generated during the final two years of the Collins administration.

11

Race and Ethnicity

WITH the announcement by John Collins that he would not seek a third term as mayor of Boston, the 1967 election became a wide-open contest with many more candidates than usual, all hoping to move into the new City Hall that had gone up at Government Center: BRA director Edward Logue; Barry Hynes, son of the previous mayor; Kevin White, four-term Massachusetts secretary of state; school committee member Mrs. Louise Day Hicks; at least three city councilors; and longtime Republican John Winthrop Sears.

These were not good times for either the nation or the city. Halfway through Collins's second term, the steady flow of federal funds that had fueled the city's ambitious urban renewal program began to dry up at an alarming rate. This was due in large part to the costs of the Vietnam War, which had begun to rise significantly during the mid-1960s. With the total U.S. military budget rising from \$51.6 billion in 1964 to \$82.5 billion in 1969, Congress was forced to cut appropriations for all kinds of domestic programs. This not only affected Boston's renewal programs and housing projects, but also caused local colleges and universities to discontinue many of the bureaus, institutes, and planning centers that had been providing valuable assistance to municipal authorities.

It was already clear that Collins's successor in 1967 would take on extensive commitments to continue projects and social welfare programs without the necessary federal funds to adequately support them.

The late 1960s, too, was a period when the social fabric of the nation seemed to be coming apart at the seams. In 1965, devastating riots in the Watts district of Los Angeles touched off a wave of racial conflict that erupted in violence during 1966 and 1967 in major northern cities such as Chicago, Detroit, and Newark. In the wake of civil rights activities, student rebellions broke out on college campuses across the country, with sit-ins, teach-ins, marches, and demonstrations protesting the oppression of the nation's corporate establishment. The formation of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966 led to public rallies and vocal demonstrations by feminists demanding equal rights for women. Escalating American involvement in the Vietnam War further expanded the student agenda, with even more violent demonstrations against President Johnson, the draft, and the expansion of the fighting. Whoever was elected mayor of Boston in November 1967 would be confronted not only with serious financial cutbacks, but also with major social disruptions. By this time, too, city authorities were being confronted with the demands of an increasingly active African-American population that, for the first time in Boston's history, was becoming a tangible political force in its own right.

After the Civil War came to a victorious conclusion in 1865, there had been every reason for members of Boston's African-American community to expect a much brighter future. On January 1, 1863, President Lincoln had put his signature on the Emancipation Proclamation announcing that all slaves were "then, thenceforward, and forever free." For the first time, too, during the Civil War, African Americans were admitted into the armed forces to serve their country like all other American citizens, achieving a record of battlefield heroism that Boston later recognized with Saint-Gaudens's stirring monument to the 54th Massachusetts Regiment on the crest of Beacon Hill. And when the end of the conflict brought the Thirteenth Amendment, and then the Fourteenth Amendment, to ratify in peacetime what had been proclaimed in wartime, the postwar years for African Americans seemed promising indeed.

And immediately after the Civil War, black citizens, especially those in Boston, had even greater reason to expect a brighter tomorrow. Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner sponsored the abolitionist black lawyer John Rock as the first African American to practice law before the U.S. Supreme Court. In the General Court of Massachusetts, Republican legislators took steps to

reward black veterans who had fought for the Union with federal jobs in post offices and customhouses. In 1866, two African Americans were elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives and, until the end of the century, one or two black men were regularly elected each year to serve in the state legislature, where they voted solidly Republican in keeping with the spirit of the Great Emancipator. And in the city of Boston itself, each ward elected two representatives to sit on the Common Council; between 1876 and 1895, a black resident from the West End (then Ward 9) filled at least one of those seats.

Beneath the surface, however, things were by no means as encouraging as they appeared. For one thing, even though the number of black residents increased substantially after the war, there were few changes either in their traditional housing patterns or in their living conditions. Between 1866 and 1868, over a thousand former slaves moved up from the South to live in the Boston-Cambridge area, raising the black population from 2,261 in 1860 to 3,496 in 1870, despite complaints by Governor John Andrew that the lack of opportunities and social services for these newcomers would create a race of "homeless wanderers." And despite the high-sounding phrases in the state's 1854 school desegregation law that followed the Sarah Roberts case, the public schools continued to reflect the city's segregated housing patterns. Elementary schools in predominantly white neighborhoods such as Charlestown, Roxbury, and Dorchester, for example, had no black students at all. By contrast, more than a third of the city's black children were enrolled in two elementary schools in the city's West End. Still confined to their highly segregated district on the north side of Beacon Hill, black adults were effectively excluded from the modern and commercial parts of Boston where jobs in business, banking, and retailing usually required more education and more sophisticated skills. Despite efforts by a small liberal labor group in Boston to integrate African-American workers into the white labor force during the postwar period, black people continued to function in their traditional capacities as laborers and stevedores, waiters and caterers, barbers and hairdressers, bootblacks and laundresses. Most black Bostonians essentially served the needs of the white community and brought in enough income to sustain their families in modest fashion. But they were seldom able to acquire the training, instruction, or experience that would enable them to move up the economic ladder.

Boston's African-American community continued to live a quiet and self-contained existence in the West End until 1895, when the Democrats in the state legislature redistricted the old black Republican neighborhood. Not only

were the African-American residents stripped of what little political influence they possessed, but they also felt jeopardized by the new wave of European immigrants, with their strange ways and indecipherable languages, as they rapidly filled up large sections of the North End and the West End.

Soon after 1895, therefore, the black residents abandoned their homes in the old West End and began moving into the lower South End, between Washington Street and Columbus Avenue, taking up residence in the old brownstone apartments that had been originally intended for well-to-do whites before the construction of the Back Bay upset real estate predictions. For a time, the only way black residents retained any political visibility was through the efforts of their local church leaders and the activities of individual spokesmen such as William Monroe Trotter. Son of a Mississippi slave who moved his family north, Trotter grew up in Boston's Hyde Park section, graduated from Harvard, and became a prosperous real estate broker. Despite his own financial security, Trotter was conscious of the insidious forms of racial discrimination in the North and in 1901 began publishing *The Guardian* as a means of pressing for civil rights. Although his hopes to create a Boston-based national civil rights movement were eclipsed by the more powerful National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), he continued his fight for freedom. In 1915 he campaigned against the showing in Boston of D. W. Griffith's movie *Birth of a Nation*, and until Trotter's death in 1934 *The Guardian* regularly reported on racial violence, police brutality, and other issues of significance to members of the city's black community.

By the early part of the twentieth century, black residents had spread along Columbus Avenue and Tremont Street into the upper part of the South End, settling along Northampton and Lenox Streets; the African-American population grew to nearly fourteen thousand by 1910. The size of the city's original black community was augmented by a fairly steady stream of black sharecroppers from rural southern states such as Georgia and Alabama who moved into Boston and took jobs as railroad porters in the Boston & Albany Railroad yards on Boylston Street or served as waiters in the various hotels around Copley Square and Park Square. After World War I, newcomers from Jamaica, Barbados, and other parts of the West Indies formed yet another part of the city's growing black population, which was still much lower (never more than 2 percent in the nineteenth century) than that of most other major American cities. Because of their small numbers even into the twentieth century, Boston blacks lacked the "critical mass" necessary for effective political or social

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action, wrote J. Anthony Lukas in *Common Ground*, his classic study of race relations in Boston.

Although there was still enough racial diversity in the South End to promote considerable interaction among black residents and their white immigrant neighbors, the district was fast taking on the social and cultural characteristics of an African-American community. A variety of church groups, social clubs, and fraternal lodges and their female auxiliaries flourished throughout the South End as places where active-minded citizens could gather to enrich their own social lives as well as to benefit those less fortunate members of the community who were in need of food, housing, and financial assistance. The district's black churches still offered the best place to meet friends, exchange views, display new clothes, hear music, and gain both emotional and spiritual sustenance. The church offered a place where black women especially could take on important responsibilities, participate regularly in social affairs, and provide monetary contributions to support the church and sustain its programs of charity and relief.

During the 1920s, black society in the South End centered around club meetings and elegant gatherings, usually at the homes of prominent club women. "Smart sets" of younger people, as the historian Sarah Deutsch has described them, tried to outdo each other in their social clubs, many of which included a small intelligentsia of professional social workers and creative writers. Eugene Gordon of the *Boston Post* edited Boston's black literary magazine *The Saturday Evening Quill*, which boasted among its contributors the playwright and Boston teacher Alvira Hazzard; novelist Gertrude Schalk; Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin's daughter, Florida Ruffin Ridley, a former Boston schoolteacher and editor of *Social Service News*; and Dorothy West, who described the experience of southern black visitors to Boston in her novel *The Living Is Easy*, and who later left Boston to participate in New York's Harlem Renaissance.

By the 1930s, after its population had passed the twenty-thousand mark, the African-American community had moved beyond its original limits and extended down to Dudley Street in lower Roxbury. "In 1936 this community was almost completely black," Amanda Houston remembered of her early years as a resident of the South End. "It sustained two weekly newspapers, *The Chronicle* and *The Guardian*, and at least four profitable restaurants, black-owned and -operated, that catered to both black and white customers. There were two Slade restaurants across the street from each other, Estelle's and Jobil's. There were

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During the 1940s and 1950s, Boston's African-American population was concentrated mainly in the South End of the city. The South End was an active and exciting community where black residents developed their own lifestyle, and where restaurants, drugstores, florist shops, barbershops, hairdressing parlors, and other black-owned enterprises did a thriving business along Tremont Street and Columbus Avenue. It was a bright, lively, active neighborhood, recalls one of its residents, where "the streets were jammed, and so were the clubs." *Republished with permission of Globe Newspaper Company, Inc., from the August 7, 1964, issue of the Boston Globe, © 1964.*

four drugstores, a florist shop, an appliance store, barbershops, hairdressing parlors, a tailor shop, and other black businesses lining Tremont Street."

It was here, in the South End–Lower Roxbury area, that the black community also developed its own distinctive political organization as a handful of local political leaders traded power for patronage, much as the Irish ward bosses had done a generation earlier. Dr. Silas F. ("Shag") Taylor, a local pharmacist, became the boss of Ward 9 with the help of his organization, the Massachusetts Colored League. During the 1930s and 1940s, Shag and his brother Balcolm ("Bal") worked with the Curley machine, exchanging votes in the black wards

for jobs, housing, and an occasional Thanksgiving turkey. “Shag Taylor could get your street cleaned, fix a pothole, get a vacant lot cleared, garbage collected, an abandoned car removed,” recalled attorney Thomas Atkins. “If you needed someone released from jail, needed a job—whatever. Nobody had any question he was the premier man, he was *the* person, he was the machine’s man, and his power came from the Curley machine.” The Taylors would set up meetings for Curley in the black community, “run ads in the papers for him, and use the favors that folks owed them to pressure people into supporting the white candidates in the Democratic party.” They were among the black politicians who switched to the Democratic party during the 1930s when Roosevelt’s New Deal seemed to offer poor people of every color their only chance for social and economic security.

It was during the 1930s and 1940s that the intersection of Massachusetts and Columbus Avenues, just two blocks east of Symphony Hall, became the exciting center of a Boston “Harlem.” At the Hi-Hat nightclub, mixed audiences of blacks and whites gathered to enjoy the performances of such celebrated jazz musicians as Fats Waller, Lionel Hampton, Count Basie, and Duke Ellington pounding out such famous numbers as “The One O’Clock Jump” and “The Back Bay Shuffle.” The crowds that thronged into the South End at night dazzled a sixteen-year-old newcomer named Malcolm Little (later known as Malcolm X) when he arrived in Boston from Michigan in 1940. “Neon lights, nightclubs, poolhalls, bars, the cars they drove!” he wrote in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. “Restaurants made the streets smell—rich, greasy, down-home black cooking! Juke boxes blared, Erskine Hawkins, Duke Ellington, Cootie Williams, dozens of others.” The Savoy Café and the Rainbow Lounge, just up the street, attracted more jazz enthusiasts to hear the playing of Lester (“Prez”) Young, Buck Clayton, and Sidney Bechet, and both the Roseland Ballroom and the Raymor-Playmor Ballroom featured the music of such “big bands” as Benny Goodman, Jimmy Lunceford, Charlie Barnett, and Woodie Herman for all-night dancing. “These sounds were heard for miles around,” recalled Reginald Weems, who grew up in the South End, reveled in the music, and frequented the various barbecue restaurants in the neighborhood. It was a bright, lively, active community when “the streets were jammed, and so were the clubs.” “Those of us who came out onto Massachusetts Avenue from the Savoy Café to find our various ways home occasionally walked in jazz time,” recalled Nat Hentoff, a celebrated music critic, in his memoir *Boston Boy*, describing his travels from his home in Jewish Roxbury to the pleasures of Boston’s black jazz scene. At

the time, it was generally assumed that Boston's African-American population would remain relatively small and would confine itself to a permanent location in the South End–Roxbury area.

By the 1940s, however, Boston's isolated and generally unnoticed African-American community began to grow remarkably in size—a phenomenon that reflected the general growth of the African-American population throughout the northern states. Until International Harvester perfected its mechanical cotton picker in 1944, according to Nicholas Lemann in *The Promised Land*, nearly 77 percent of black Americans still lived in the South, with 49 percent of these people located in rural areas. The invention of the mechanical cotton picker changed all that. In the past, a good field hand had been able to pick twenty pounds of cotton in an hour; a mechanical picker, in that same hour, could pick as many as a thousand pounds (two bales). As far as most black sharecroppers were concerned, there was no more work in the cotton fields of the South. They would have to move north to look for new jobs. Between 1910 and 1970, 6.5 million black Americans moved from the South to the North; 5 million of these moved *after* 1940, replaced by mechanical farming. In sheer numbers, Lemann concludes, the black migration from the South outranks the migration of any other ethnic group to the United States—Irish, Italians, Jews, or Poles. For African Americans, the migration meant leaving what had always been their economic and social base in America and finding a completely new life in the North.

The internal mass migration of African Americans as the result of the mechanical cotton picker was further stimulated by the exigencies of World War II, which produced exactly the kinds of job opportunities the newly dispossessed black workers were looking for. Skilled and unskilled black workers from the South moved into northern cities like St. Louis, Detroit, Cincinnati, and Chicago in search of work; many also came into the New England region to work in industrial plants, army posts, armories, shipyards, naval bases, and arsenals. As a consequence, Boston's black population nearly doubled in only a single decade, rising from some twenty-three thousand in 1940 to over forty thousand in 1950. Because no new construction had taken place in the Roxbury area since 1920, the overcrowded black population was literally bulging at the seams. By the late 1960s, African Americans were starting to move beyond the confines of their traditional Roxbury boundaries, settling along the fringes of such formerly all-white neighborhoods as Dorchester, Mattapan, Jamaica Plain, Roslindale, and Hyde Park.

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It was not long before the growing spread of the black population ran into a mounting wall of white resistance. Intensely proud of the distinctively ethnic characteristics that had distinguished their particular neighborhoods for more than half a century, and brought up with the strict admonition to “stay with your own kind,” the Irish in South Boston and Charlestown, the Italians in East Boston and the North End, and the Jews of Mattapan, along with other residents of traditionally white areas, reacted in panic and alarm at the idea that African Americans were moving into their neighborhoods—their “turf.” Racial tensions quickly mounted as whites raised fears of blacks taking their jobs, lowering the standards of their all-white schools, bringing down property values, and adding to the danger of crime in the streets. The fact that at both the national and the state levels the economic situation was showing signs of cracking only further solidified the determination of middle-class and working-class white people to keep the black people from getting “too much, too soon.” At the same time, it stiffened the resolve of African-Americans residents to get their fair share of the American way of life before it was too late.

Stimulated by the successes of the civil rights movement in the South, inspired by the words of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and encouraged by the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Boston’s African-American community began to translate its growing numbers into a sufficient level of political power to address the needs of blacks and bring about changes in the way they saw themselves treated. As the Collins administration and the predominantly white political establishment failed to come up with reasonable or effective solutions to such issues as high unemployment, insufficient public housing, unsatisfactory health care, and inadequate schooling, the members of the black community looked with considerable interest at the outcome of the upcoming 1967 mayoral election.

With the three city councilors cutting into each other’s votes in the September primaries, and with John Sears neutralizing Ed Logue’s votes in the fashionable Beacon Hill district, the two finalists who emerged to battle it out in the November election were Louise Day Hicks, who came in first with about 28 percent of the votes cast, and Kevin Hagan White, who came in second with 20 percent. This meant that in two months Boston might well have a woman as mayor for the first time in its history.

Mrs. Hicks of South Boston was a former member of the Boston School Committee and an outspoken champion of local autonomy and neighborhood schools. In June 1963, the NAACP had first pointed out that in violation of the

1954 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, many of Boston's public schools were predominantly white while other schools were predominantly black. The NAACP demanded that steps be taken to integrate the Boston schools as soon as possible in accordance with the Court's ruling. School committee chair Louise Day Hicks, however, along with the rest of the all-white school committee, denied charges of de facto segregation in their public school system. The makeup of each school, they insisted, was merely a reflection of the racial and ethnic composition of the individual neighborhood. Insisting that the *Brown* decision did not apply to Boston schools, the school committee refused to develop any comprehensive plan for integration. White voters clearly approved this position, and Mrs. Hicks had received overwhelming support from the white ethnic neighborhoods in her bids for reelection to the school committee. Now she was using her influence as the city's top vote-getter to become the city's first female mayor.

Hicks's rival in November 1967 was Kevin H. White, former secretary of state of the commonwealth, who hoped to get enough support from a broad spectrum of the Boston community to put himself in office. As a man whose father and grandfather had served as presidents of the Boston City Council, and whose father-in-law (William "Mother" Galvin) had been a power in Charlestown politics, White came from a long line of active politicians and soon established himself as a clever and resourceful campaigner. A graduate of Williams College and the Boston College Law School, he was acceptable to upper-middle-class groups in the city as a capable administrator who would continue the urban renewal programs of his predecessors. As four-time secretary of state, he was viewed by older members of the Yankee community as an appealing "nonpolitical" and accommodationist candidate in the tradition of Hynes and Collins. And as a reputed liberal-minded progressive, he was more than acceptable to members of the city's black community, who endorsed him strongly as the only viable alternative to Mrs. Hicks. "Kevin White has realistically met the issues of this campaign and the issues and problems that confront the city of Boston with a candid and believable approach," declared the black community's *Bay State Banner* in its election-eve endorsement.

Although her supporters in South Boston's Wards 6 and 7 gave Louise Day Hicks a whopping 11,335 votes to a meager 4,489 for her opponent, White was able to pile up enough votes in the city's other wards to defeat Mrs. Hicks in November 1967 by a margin of 12,000 votes. The former secretary of state began his first term of office (1968–1972) during perhaps one of the most chaotic and



Kevin White was the first Boston mayor to recognize the city's growing African-American population as a new political constituency. During times of racial tensions, he visited the city's black neighborhoods, cultivated the support of community leaders, and provided recreational outlets for young people. Here he meets with Melnea Cass (second from left) and other community leaders to help launch a drive for the construction of the Harriet Tubman House in the South End. *Courtesy of the Boston Public Library, Print Department.*

disruptive periods in American history. The nation had been shocked beyond words by the tragic assassination of President John F. Kennedy in November 1963 and suffered further anguish when the brutal murder of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., in April 1968 was followed by the killing of Senator Robert F. Kennedy only two months later. In one American city after another, waves of explosive violence erupted. Protests against the war in Vietnam grew in both number and intensity; civil rights demonstrations multiplied at a prodigious rate; student upheavals paralyzed the nation's colleges and universities from one coast to the other. The city of Boston—as a major academic center, as a focal point of antiwar resistance, and as an urban community whose black population was increasingly militant—could easily have been ripped apart by the convulsive emotionalism generated by national rage and racial frustration.

✱ Mayor Kevin White worked long and exhaustively to keep the city under control during those critical years by placating as many of the varied and often conflicting constituencies as possible. He maintained good relations with the

bankers and businessmen of the inner-city financial establishment by pushing ahead with the various plans for urban renewal and commercial development in order to further modernize the city and improve its financial standing. Most of the basic planning and design for the “New Boston” had been the work of Mayors Hynes and Collins, but a great many of the projects actually came to completion during the unprecedented sixteen-year term of Kevin White. The new mayor enthusiastically sustained the momentum for construction begun by his predecessors and added his own touch by transforming the old and dilapidated Quincy Market area behind Faneuil Hall into one of the most attractive and successful tourist attractions in the city. He took advantage of the new spirit of optimism to encourage business leaders, builders, and real estate developers to become part of Boston’s changing scene. A cluster of high-rise structures—banks, insurance companies, hotels—went up in the heart of the city, adding to Boston’s service-oriented economy and contributing more impressive silhouettes to its emerging skyline. White used his energetic talents and charismatic personality to dramatize the “New Boston,” publicizing its financial opportunities, capitalizing on its cultural advantages, and declaring it to be “livable” city.

At the same time, Kevin White set about establishing closer contact with representatives of the middle- and low-income white ethnic communities who had complained that their local interests had been ignored by the Collins administration. Assuring the neighborhoods that he would respond to their concerns, White created a series of “Little City Halls” in various localities, staffed by members of his administration, as a means of making downtown city government more responsive to the needs of the neighborhood residents. In the process, these Little City Halls also served as strategic political bases from which City Hall could send out foot soldiers and volunteers to build up greater grass-roots political support for Kevin White. White spent much more money than previous administrations on capital improvements in the neighborhoods, providing better lighting and improved fire and police protection to help reduce crime and vandalism.

Kevin White also appreciated the political realities of the racial issues that had appeared for the first time in Boston political history during the election of 1967. As mayor, he worked hard to keep things calm in the city’s restive African-American community, especially after the murder of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., only three months after White had begun his first term as mayor. With his jacket slung over his shoulder and his necktie loosened around

the collar of his oxford-cloth shirt, White became a frequent visitor in the black neighborhoods, strolling along the streets, sauntering through the playgrounds, talking with groups of mothers, and establishing personal contacts with local black leaders. He increased the number of black policemen in the Roxbury area to counteract charges of police brutality, made an effort to include black residents as full members of the Boston community, and supported a popular mobile program called "Summerthing" to supply music and entertainment for the younger elements of the neighborhoods during the long and dangerous summer months.

Also in 1968, in a further effort to upgrade the status of black residents, Mayor White encouraged a consortium of twenty-two Boston savings banks called the Boston Banks Urban Renewal Group (B-BURG) to allocate some \$50 million in mortgage money to encourage low-income black families to purchase homes in the Mattapan area. When the Hynes administration demolished the New York Streets section of the South End back in 1954, displaced tenants were forced to look for other places to live. Most white families went into housing projects in South Boston, Dorchester, and Jamaica Plain; African-American and Puerto Rican families moved to Washington Park and North Dorchester. A number of these black families moved across into northern Mattapan, a neighborhood considered to be the largest Jewish community in New England. After World War II, some younger Jewish families (many veterans taking advantage of the G.I. Bill) moved into the suburbs of Milton, Randolph, and Canton in search of larger houses and better schools. As late as the mid-1950s, however, there were still some fifty thousand Jewish residents still living in Mattapan. The availability of new mortgage money from the Boston banks changed all that. Between 1968 and 1970, some three thousand African-American families entered Mattapan, moving along Blue Hill Avenue from Grove Hall toward Mattapan Square. By 1972, the number of Jewish residents in the area had dropped to fewer than twenty-five hundred, and the subsequent flare-ups of racial fears, panic selling, and blockbusting accelerated the exodus of Jewish families to the point where a once predominantly Jewish community was transformed into an almost all-black neighborhood.

By the time Kevin White started his second term as mayor in 1972, it seemed to most observers that Boston had weathered the worst of the storm. By that time the Vietnam War had begun to wind down, the antiwar protests had begun to peter out, the colleges were settling down, and racial controversies appeared to be lessening. By the time the war in Vietnam officially came to an end early

in 1973, the city showed signs of resuming a more normal and peaceful routine, with little more trouble on the horizon than deciding the most appropriate way of celebrating the bicentennial of the nation's independence. During 1975–1976, the White administration organized a spectacular series of events that caught the attention of people everywhere, including the arrival of the Tall Ships in Boston Harbor, the historic visit of Queen Elizabeth II of England, and the gigantic Fourth of July concert on the Esplanade with Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops playing Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture* as fireworks lit up the summer night.

Unfortunately, however, the air of gaiety and festivity that marked the bicentennial celebrations was largely superficial—and certainly short-lived. Underneath the apparently calm and tranquil surface, there were a number of critical issues that had already divided the community into bitter factions and would eventually lead to serious confrontations with city government. One complex issue was the changing character of the national economy and its numerous repercussions at the local levels. During the mid-1970s, national production began declining alarmingly. Before long, runaway inflation began to send prices for food, clothing, heating fuel, gasoline, and rent soaring to incredible heights. In 1977 the inflation rate was up to 6 percent; by 1979 it was over 10 percent; by 1980 it had passed 12 percent. The resulting recession worked its most distressing effects on the New England region, where unemployment rates climbed to levels not seen since the days of the Great Depression. In view of the complex financial needs of a big city like Boston, with a large blue-collar white population and rising unemployment among its growing black population, the already uneasy relationship between low-income blacks and low-income whites became even more precarious. Basic racial antagonisms resulting from the movement of blacks into white neighborhoods were transformed into a life-and-death struggle for economic survival as both races fought desperately for a share in the meager economic benefits that seemed to be getting smaller every day. Indeed, this growing economic tension between racial groups in Boston only served to exacerbate another major problem that was to occupy much of Mayor White's time and attention during his second administration—the issue of school desegregation and the crisis of mandatory busing.

Despite their recent and quite dramatic increase in numbers, African-American citizens of Boston were still unable to translate their growing presence in the city into meaningful political clout. In 1960, they still constituted little more than 10 percent of the total population. Then, too, the postwar social

problems plaguing major American urban centers like Boston now went far beyond the capacities of traditional ward bosses and local neighborhood leaders. Houses needed repair, tenements were becoming dilapidated, rents were going up all the time, unemployment was becoming endemic to black neighborhoods, and insurance companies were holding back on coverage. The black population became increasingly angry and restive as the white political establishment showed no signs of coming up with effective solutions. Despite the fact that in 1965 the Massachusetts General Court passed a Racial Imbalance Act, which stated that any school that was more than 50 percent black would be considered racially imbalanced, the Boston School Committee refused to admit charges by the NAACP that de facto segregation existed in the public schools and indicated that it had no intention of developing any plans for integration.

Frustrated by what they considered the Boston School Committee's lack of response, a number of African-American parents arranged with the NAACP to bring a class-action suit against the school committee in the name of a parent named Tallulah Morgan. Since James Hennigan was school committee chair at the time, the case became known as *Morgan v. Hennigan*. Early in 1972, the *Morgan* case was assigned by lot to federal judge W. Arthur Garrity, Jr., an Irish-Catholic from Worcester, a graduate of Holy Cross and the Harvard Law School, a campaign worker for John F. Kennedy, and a highly respected member of the Massachusetts Bar. For two years Judge Garrity read the literature and listened to the arguments in the case; on June 21, 1974, he finally handed down his decision. The Boston School Committee, he said, had "knowingly carried out a systematic program of segregation" and had "intentionally brought about and maintained a dual system." For these reasons, he concluded, "the entire school system of Boston is unconstitutionally segregated." He then went on to order a program designed to bus some eighteen thousand schoolchildren, to go into effect the following September, in order to achieve a balanced mix of white and black students in the schools.

As far as the white neighborhoods were concerned, this was the last straw. They decided to resist to the bitter end what they regarded as the latest intrusion into their private lives and local traditions. Encouraged by officials on the school committee as well as by members of the city council who called Judge Garrity's decision the "death knell of the city," they prepared to defend the sanctity of their "neighborhood schools" with every weapon at their command. In many localities, the old "neighborhood spirit," which had declined appreciably during the 1950s and 1960s, was amazingly revitalized by the busing issue; it provided



Louise Day Hicks was the first woman in the history of Boston to be a candidate for the office of mayor. In 1961, Mrs. Hicks had won a seat on the Boston School Committee, where she became a vocal critic of plans to desegregate the city's public school system. She later won widespread support in her own neighborhood of South Boston, as well as in other ethnic communities, for her opposition to court-ordered busing and her support of local neighborhood schools. *Courtesy of the Boston Public Library, Print Department.*

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a common danger and a common enemy against which residents could unify their efforts and direct their attacks. Strikes, boycotts, harassment, and outright violence attended the start of the city's busing program during 1974–1975, to the extent that hundreds of city and state police officers were called in to patrol the streets, monitor the schools, and protect the yellow buses that carried black students to schools in white neighborhoods and white students to schools in black neighborhoods. Because of their traditional roles as leading Irish-Catholic neighborhoods, and because of their strategic geographical locations as virtually isolated peninsulas, South Boston and Charlestown became the storm centers of white protest, and the high schools in these districts the focal points of the most serious racial disturbances.

Despite the noise and tumult that attended the enforcement of mandatory busing, Judge Garrity refused to be deterred from what he regarded as the program's moral objective. When the school committee refused a direct order to develop a citywide school integration plan, the judge held the offending officials in contempt of court and put forth his own desegregation plan for September 1975, calling for the busing of three thousand more students than under his 1974 plan. On May 10, 1975, the U.S. Supreme Court gave its support to Judge Garrity by refusing to review his original decision that found the Boston schools to be unconstitutionally segregated.

Garrity's newest actions only further fanned the flames of neighborhood opposition. A coalition of neighborhood groups known as ROAR (Restore Our Alienated Rights) was formed by Louise Day Hicks to continue the fight against busing and, encouraged by sympathetic remarks by President Gerald L. Ford, the advocates of neighborhood schools pressed for a constitutional amendment to outlaw enforced busing. In this effort, however, they were discouraged by such national political leaders as Senator Edward Kennedy, Senator Edward Brooke, and Congressman Thomas ("Tip") O'Neill. A short time later, the protesters suffered another serious setback when the U.S. Attorney General refused to have the Justice Department review the Boston situation. For the time being, at least, the opponents of busing would have to rely on their own resources to maintain control of their neighborhoods and determine the composition of their schools. The next two years saw a series of ugly racial incidents—including stonings, beatings, firebombings, and even shootings—earning Boston the label of the most racist city in America. For a city that had been heralded as the "Cradle of Liberty" and the "Athens of America," this was an embarrassment from both a historic as well as a humanistic point of view.

The busing issue created a major schism in the city, not only between white people and black people, but also between working-class Irish Catholics in the neighborhoods and their more affluent friends and relatives who had moved away to the suburbs. "The federal court orders of 1974 and 1975," observes J. Anthony Lukas in *Common Ground*, "assumed that the burden of integration would fall disproportionately on the poor of both races." Blue-collar families in neighborhoods like South Boston, Charlestown, and East Boston felt they were being forced to face the full impact of racial desegregation all by themselves, while other parts of the Greater Boston area got away scot-free. These neighborhood residents were the ones who had to watch their children bused away every morning to predominantly black neighborhoods, while their friends and relatives in the affluent suburbs enrolled their children in mostly all-white schools that were unaffected by Judge Garrity's ruling. The neighborhood residents complained that they were the ones whose husbands, fathers, brothers, and uncles were denied jobs or promotions in the police, fire, and public works departments, while doctors, lawyers, and bankers in the suburbs were far removed from the effects of such liberal "social experiments." Irish and Italian working-class residents and their families felt betrayed and abandoned by "their own kind," by people they had always looked up to and counted on—political leaders, social workers, educators, lawyers, judges, even priests and bishops—who now seemed to be more concerned with the problems of newly arrived black people than with the needs of poor white people whose families had lived in Boston for generations. "For the opponents of busing," wrote Ronald Formisano in *Boston against Busing*, "the threat to their neighborhoods and lifestyles constituted a trampling on their freedom." Feeling themselves at the mercy of outside forces, and realizing that there was no one to help them, local residents took matters into their own hands and, in the long Celtic tradition of lost causes, decided to go down fighting.

At almost the same time that Mayor White was grappling with the tensions and violence generated by a busing crisis that seemed incapable of resolution, he also found his administration under attack from organized forces in the white neighborhoods that were demanding a greater role in the decision-making process of city government. In addition to their general feelings of alienation and neglect by an administration they felt catered to the business-people, the bankers, and the financiers of downtown Boston, the people in the neighborhoods had several very specific complaints. One was the way in which government agencies, private institutions, and real estate developers

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were moving into local communities, taking over land and housing, displacing old-time inhabitants, and polluting the environment in various ways. The continued expansion of Logan Airport in East Boston, the spread of the Harvard Medical School complex into the Mission Hill area, and the impact of the Tufts–New England Medical Center on the Boston Chinatown district were examples of the kind of encroachment feared by every neighborhood. The recollections of what had happened to the old West End were still vivid in the memories of local Bostonians.

Another complaint of local communities was the way in which banking and real estate policies affected public and private housing in the neighborhoods. In the years after World War II, many Boston banks refused to grant mortgages or home-improvement loans in areas they declared to be “blighted” or “bad”



Court-ordered busing as a method of desegregating Boston’s public schools provoked a decade of controversy between those who believed it was the only way to end a racially segregated school system and those who insisted on the right of parents to send their children to neighborhood schools. Crowds of angry parents often clashed with special tactical police units in front of schools, while police motorcycles escorted the yellow school buses to ensure the safety of the children. *Republished with permission of Globe Newspaper Company, Inc., from the December 11, 1974, issue of the Boston Globe, © 1974.*

neighborhoods. As a result of this policy of “redlining,” houses could not be sold to young families, the cost of maintenance and repairs became prohibitive, and older neighborhoods began to show signs of the blight and decay predicted by the banks. Parks and playgrounds soon were neglected, streets were no longer cleaned, garbage was not collected, homes fell into serious disrepair, vandalism became commonplace, many dwellings were abandoned, and in areas like the Fenway the frightening specter of arson added to the growing sense of helplessness and despair.

Still another problem in several neighborhoods was the relatively new process called “gentrification.” In an interesting reversal of the post–World War II movement of families into the suburbs, the late 1960s and early 1970s saw a movement back to the city. Well-educated and affluent young people, mostly professionals—engineers, computer specialists, architects, designers, nurses, medical technicians—single or married with few or no children, saw the obvious benefits of living in a city like Boston. They were attracted by the city’s service economy, its numerous cultural and educational institutions, its proximity to rural and recreational areas, and its appeal as a walkable and “livable” city. In large numbers, this young “gentry” moved into convenient and historic locations like the North End and the South End, as well as into locations along the waterfront. With their professional incomes, however, they forced up the price of rents, raised the costs of leasing apartments, and accelerated the conversion to condominiums. This transformation caused serious financial burdens for older and poorer residents, forcing many of them to move out of old and familiar neighborhoods in which most had spent their entire lives.

Fearing that the problems with which they were confronted would escalate beyond control, and convinced that they could obtain no effective relief or protection from the ordinary channels of city government, residents at the local level took matters into their own hands. They would determine their own priorities, assess their own needs, and defend their own neighborhoods. Boston saw an example of grass-roots political power designed to force both city officials and business representatives, whenever they prepared any future plans involving the neighborhoods, to take into account the interests of the people. Drawing heavily upon the organizational techniques employed so successfully by student protesters, civil rights organizers, and feminist demonstrators, militant groups of local activists formed community organizations to prevent what they regarded as the destruction of their neighborhoods. Men and women, whites and blacks, Hispanics and Asians, longtime residents and

new arrivals, housewives and laborers, amateurs and professionals—some had considerable backgrounds in community organization, but most had little experience at all.

Neighborhood residents formed their own development corporations to help them rehabilitate rundown houses, redevelop dying business districts, and even encourage light industry to come into their districts. The Codman Square Community Development Corporation (CSCDC) and the South Boston Community Development Corporation (SBCDC) were among several local agencies that worked to preserve their districts from government renewal plans; the Massachusetts Urban Reinvestment Advisory Group (MURAG) was especially influential in forcing many Boston banks to invest their money in local neighborhoods; the *Inquilinos Boricuas en Accion* (IBA) was successful in creating a Hispanic residential development in the South End called Villa Victoria. Parents fought for meaningful educational reforms through such coalitions as the Boston Home and School Association and the Federation for Children with Special Needs; Hispanic parents worked for successful programs in bilingual education with *La Grassa Mancha*. And in the Fenway area, residents formed the Symphony Tenants Organizing Project (STOP) when they became convinced that city and state authorities were not doing enough to stop the alarming amount of arson in that crowded neighborhood. Sometimes the groups succeeded; sometimes they failed; sometimes they were forced to accept compromise solutions. But in any case, these local organizations quickly became a force that could no longer be ignored by either the politicians at City Hall or the bankers in their boardrooms. Coalition politics became a new and alternative source of power in Kevin White's Boston and would have a decided influence on all decisions regarding the social and economic future of Boston's neighborhoods.

Racial disturbances that could not be resolved, a busing crisis that got worse every day, neighborhood opposition that cut into his political power, and nagging financial problems that made it more difficult to continue urban renewal cut deeply into Mayor White's image as a young, liberal, and effective big-city mayor. After his runaway victory in his second contest with Mrs. Hicks in 1972, Kevin White had begun to be viewed as an asset to the Democratic party on the national level. Indeed, during the presidential campaign of 1972 he was wooed by Senator George McGovern as a possible running mate. Although the nomination never materialized, White spent the better part of the next year touring the nation in an attempt to rebuild the hopes of the Democratic party.

Back home, however, White's personal magnetism began to fade, and his political power showed alarming signs of erosion. With city elections coming up in November 1975, he found himself forced to marshal his political forces against a surprisingly strong challenge from State Senator Joseph F. Timilty. Tall and handsome, an ex-Marine and former city councilor, Timilty claimed to speak for the people of the neighborhoods and cut deeply into the mayor's traditional sources of political support. Fighting against charges of political corruption and misuse of patronage, White managed to defeat Timilty by an embarrassingly narrow margin in an election that also returned an all-white school committee to administer what was becoming an increasingly nonwhite school system. This made it almost a certainty that as Kevin White prepared to enter his third term as mayor of Boston, he would not be able to make any substantial improvements in the city's complex racial dilemma that centered on court-ordered busing.

After his hard-fought 1975 election, Mayor White seemed to withdraw even further from personal involvement in neighborhood affairs. He found himself pummeled from all sides, caught between the demands of the black community and the fears of the white neighborhoods, between the authority of federal power and the pride of local authority, between the judicial gavel of Judge Arthur Garrity and the rosary beads of Louise Day Hicks. No amount of pleading, moderating, cajoling, or threatening could produce any sort of compromise solution. There was no middle ground—no common ground—and there was little or no support from other elected city officials. Whatever he did was wrong: blacks accused him of selling out to the white establishment; whites called him "Mayor Black" and accused him of pandering to the African-American constituency. Discouraged by repeated failures at solving the busing crisis, weary from grappling with community problems, and perhaps still fascinated by the prospects of national office, White concentrated more and more on the development of the downtown area. He intensified his efforts to publicize the attractions of the "New Boston" and continued to emphasize its new reputation as a "world-class city." Traveling to Europe and to the Far East, he created links with "sister cities" in various parts of the world in order to promote tourism and encourage investment. He associated with business leaders and banking officials, met with architects and designers, negotiated with planners and developers, greeted foreign diplomats at City Hall, and held receptions for dignitaries at the elegant Parkman House on Beacon Hill. He obviously found this kind of atmosphere much more congenial and rewarding

than the thankless rough-and-tumble politics that now involved both racial fears and ethnic hatreds.

Although White and his revitalized political machine of department heads, city workers, precinct captains, and volunteers were able to defeat Joe Timilty again in 1979, the mayor's fourth term proved to be difficult and often painful. In addition to the continued pressures from both the black community and white neighborhoods, White's last years in City Hall were plagued by an increasingly troubled economy. During the administration of President Jimmy Carter, from 1976 to 1980, inflation reached double-digit figures, unemployment rose to unprecedented heights, and supplies of gasoline and heating fuels were both scarce and expensive. Things became even worse after the Republican victory in November 1980. President Ronald Reagan made severe cuts in the amount of federal money being spent for public health, education, welfare, unemployment, and similar social services. And at the local level, a state referendum called Proposition 2½ placed a ceiling on property taxes, thereby sharply curtailing appropriations and expenditures. The fact that the mayor of Boston had embarrassingly little political influence beyond the actual confines of the city—and that representatives from other parts of the commonwealth took a definitely unsympathetic view of Boston and its complicated economic problems—made it extremely difficult for White to obtain financial assistance from the state legislature on Beacon Hill.

On the one hand, the downtown sections of the city continued to show signs of progress and prosperity. Business and office space increased, new hotels multiplied, the old retail district was modernized, and the Faneuil Hall Marketplace did a thriving business as a major tourist attraction. On the other hand, average working-class residents in the neighborhoods suffered some of the worst effects of the recession, especially when Mayor White responded to fiscal restraints by laying off nearly four thousand city employees, including firefighters and police officers. According to the 1980 federal census, median family income in Boston had become one of the lowest among major cities in the United States. The report classified 22 percent of all Boston families as "low income" and stated that 20 percent of all Boston households received some form of rent subsidy, as compared to a national average of only 5–8 percent. Despite all the accomplishments of the "New Boston," as late as 1982 a respected Brookings Institution study on urban life concluded that Boston still ranked in the bottom third of all major U.S. cities, and well below such cities as Detroit, Newark, and Oakland, California. On twenty-two of the study's twenty-five

indicators—which measured such things as unemployment, poverty, crime, and municipal debt—Boston was near or at the very bottom.

The anger and frustration of working-class families during this period of recession caused further erosion of Kevin White's political support in traditional white neighborhoods, and even many of the mayor's former supporters in the African-American community were now looking for new leadership from among their own people. White was characterized as a self-centered politician who was only interested in keeping himself in power, more concerned with prosperous investors and glamorous celebrities than with the everyday problems of working-class men and women. Early in White's fourth administration, the signs were becoming painfully clear that the once popular mayor might not be able to carry enough wards to win a fifth term.

Conservatives in the city complained about his spendthrift ways, and the Parkman House on Beacon Hill where he entertained close fiends and visiting dignitaries soon became a dramatic symbol of the mayor's extravagant tastes. Neighborhood leaders refused to accept his explanation for his financial cutbacks and denounced him for endangering the health and safety of their communities when he closed fire and police stations. Political opponents charged him with such flagrant misuse of political patronage as forcing city employees to contribute to his political campaigns and using city funds to defray the costs of a birthday party for his wife. And as election time drew near during 1983, federal investigations into charges of political corruption and financial irregularities further embarrassed the White administration and caused a steady deterioration of his base of support throughout the city.

Although his pollsters assured him that he could win another election, Kevin White decided not to try. On May 26, 1983, he delivered to the viewers of Boston a brief televised announcement of his retirement from political life. He had served as mayor of Boston for sixteen consecutive years, from 1967 to 1983, longer than any other person in the city's history. But they were years of incredible strain and turmoil that pitted young against old, black against white, rich against poor, police against citizens, parishioners against priests, and family members against each other. The incessant cries of protest, shouts of defiance, and screams of hatred took their toll as much on the mayor as they did on his badly divided city. It was time to go. Perhaps the passage of time, the cooling of passions, and the arrival of new personalities might finally restore some measure of peace to a city that had been under siege for so long.

Considering the extreme bitterness and unbearable tension that marked the decade following the violent beginnings of court-ordered busing in September 1974, the political campaign conducted for Boston's mayoral election in November 1983 took place with a remarkable degree of restraint and civility. Once Kevin White made it known that he would not seek a fifth term as mayor of Boston, a number of candidates announced their intentions, but in the preliminary election in October the final choice came down to two men: Raymond Flynn and Melvin King, both of whom represented the concerns of the neighborhoods as opposed to the interests of the downtown business and political establishment.

Ray Flynn, age forty-four, was a three-term member of the Boston City Council, a lifelong resident of South Boston, a devout Roman Catholic, and a spokesman for neighborhood schools. He had been a vocal opponent of court-ordered busing during the 1970s but actively engaged in peaceful activities to prevent the outbreaks of violence that marked the early years of the controversial experiment. A rather taciturn and unpretentious individual, Flynn went about the business of politicking in a steady, determined, and down-to-earth manner.

Flynn's opponent in 1983 was Mel King, age fifty-five, a former teacher, social worker, political organizer, and state representative who became the first African-American candidate in Boston's history to reach the preliminary election. Encouraged by the victories of black mayoral candidates in Chicago and Philadelphia during 1983, King formed a multiracial "rainbow coalition" to attract votes not only from the city's black residents, but also from the increasing number of immigrants who had come to Boston in recent years. In 1980, it was reported that the city had over eighty-seven thousand residents who had been born in foreign countries, and that nearly one hundred thousand residents of the city spoke a language other than English in their homes. While some of these newcomers came from more familiar European countries such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Russia, a great many more had arrived from the Caribbean and from several regions of Central and South America. In addition to thousands of immigrants from Puerto Rico, Jamaica, and Barbados, more recent arrivals had come from El Salvador and Honduras. Mel King worked hard to add these new residents to the numbers of his own loyal black supporters as "people of color" in order to create a substantial nonwhite voting block that would increase his chances for election.

Both Flynn and King took similar positions on the major issues of the campaign—espousing neighborhood interests, proposing liberal public

housing programs, and urging increased economic assistance for the unemployed, the homeless, and the disadvantaged of the city. Despite the fact that King captured an overwhelming number of the city's black votes, Flynn won what proved to be an easy victory by sweeping the predominantly white neighborhoods. In his victory statement, Flynn underlined the basic theme of the election by promising to obtain for the neighborhoods a greater share of the prosperous economic revitalization that was going on in the downtown area of the city. It was time, he said, to tip the scales in the other direction in order to achieve a more equitable balance between those who were prospering as a result of urban renewal and those who had been left behind.

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Life in a Changing City

ON JANUARY 2, 1984, Boston's forty-sixth mayor, Raymond L. Flynn, held the largest inauguration ceremony in the city's history at the Wang Center for the Performing Arts in order to accommodate over four thousand friends, neighbors, and campaign workers. This was in keeping with his image as the "people's mayor," representing the people of the neighborhoods in the well-known populist tradition of James Michael Curley. In his inaugural address, Flynn emphasized his determination to create racial harmony within the city and bring an end to the hatred and bitterness that had characterized the previous ten years. "The full weight of city government will be brought down," he declared, "on all those who seek, because of race or color, to deny anyone from any street, any school, any park, any home, any job, in any neighborhood of the city."

Flynn's forthright stand against racism and his assurances that he would enforce the laws guaranteeing civil liberties seemed to produce results. According to a poll conducted early in 1987 by the Kennedy School of Government, 41 percent of the respondents, most of whom lived in neighborhoods in which one race was predominant, agreed that race relations in Boston as a whole had improved in recent years. This type of positive response seemed to be borne out

by the city's Community Disorders Unit, which reported that the number of civil rights investigations in 1987 showed a definite decline since the early days of busing. From a total of 607 racial incidents reported in 1978, the numbers steadily went down to 300 in 1980 to 200 in 1985, and to 157 in 1987. "This is not to suggest that we have reached the pinnacle of race relations in the city of Boston," said Mayor Flynn, "but that we're working very hard at it, and that we take this responsibility very seriously."

Conditions in Boston's schools resulting from the desegregation process also resumed a more normal pattern. On September 3, 1985, on the day Dr. Laval Wilson assumed office as the city's first African-American superintendent of schools, Judge Arthur Garrity turned control of the schools back to the city's school committee, although he retained standby jurisdiction over such things as student assignments and parental involvement. By this time, the racial makeup of Boston's schools had changed dramatically. Out of a total of 59,895 students in the system, there were now 28,551 blacks, 15,842 whites, 10,760 Hispanics, and 4,742 Asians. With the number of white students having dropped precipitously from 45,000 in 1974 to 15,842 in 1987—a loss of nearly 30,000 white students in little more than ten years—the school system had become almost 75 percent nonwhite.

In addition to addressing the city's racial tensions, Mayor Flynn also focused his attention on the needs of at least two other major constituencies in the city. First, he had to fulfill his pledges to the various neighborhoods and provide more low-cost housing, cleaner streets, additional parks and recreational areas, more effective fire and police protection, and greater opportunities for employment. Much in the old Curley tradition, Flynn adopted a high degree of visibility throughout the city as he dramatized the needs of the neighborhoods as well as his own personal energies in addressing those needs. Capitalizing on local television coverage, the mayor was shown riding on snow plows, filling in potholes, attending serious fires, visiting wounded police officers, playing basketball with children at local playgrounds, marching in parades, and involving himself in other public activities directly related to the interests of his working-class voting constituents in the neighborhoods.

On a more institutional level, at the beginning of his term, Flynn created a Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services, appointed liaisons to each community and ethnic group, and encouraged the formation of neighborhood councils through which residents could monitor the delivery of basic services. Flynn also concerned himself with the growing problems of poverty and homelessness

throughout the city. He established a Mayor's Hunger Commission to help create networks of public and private agencies for distributing meals and groceries to hungry residents. Committing more than \$75 million to programs for the homeless, Flynn promised that no one would be denied "a warm bed, transportation to a shelter, food, or quality health care just because they are poor."

While he was dealing with neighborhood issues, Flynn also had to convince the downtown bankers, financiers, and real estate developers that he was not just another James Michael Curley out to "soak the rich" and turn back the tide of urban development. In order to stimulate greater interaction between the downtown business establishment and the neighborhood populations, the Flynn administration established a Linked Deposit program requiring that banks holding city funds meet certain standards of investment in minority neighborhoods, or else face the withdrawal of city deposits. The new administration also supported a \$400 million neighborhood reinvestment agreement with the downtown banking community to increase below-market mortgage and business loans to minority neighborhoods. In addition to calling for increased hiring of local residents, women, and members of minority groups on publicly funded construction projects, Flynn also pressured construction companies and real estate developers to contribute one dollar per square foot to support local job-training programs. In pursuing his Linked Deposit program, Ray Flynn assured the members of the business community that they were essential to the future prosperity of the city and that he would work with them to continue the kind of construction and expansion that had already made Boston one of the leading cities in America in this respect. In several ways, the first four years of the Flynn administration appeared to give the city a much-needed period in which to catch its breath and get back on its feet again after the traumatic events of the previous decade.

On November 3, 1987, Raymond L. Flynn won reelection to a second term as mayor of Boston in a landslide victory, winning 63,412 votes to Joseph F. Timilty's 30,897 with more than 67 percent of the total vote, and taking twenty out of the city's twenty-two wards. Flynn's margins of victory were particularly impressive in the African-American sections of the city. Ironically, however, he suffered a surprising setback in his own home wards in South Boston after he announced his decision to comply with a federal order to desegregate the city's public housing projects. Flynn met personally with his outraged local critics at several noisy public hearings in the months that followed his reelection, reemphasizing his commitment to integrated housing but also

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offering to work out agreements that would allay the fears and apprehensions of older neighborhood residents. Gradually tensions lessened, and the Flynn administration settled down to a more normal pattern of accommodation with the complex elements of Boston's population, both in the central city as well as in the surrounding neighborhoods.

During Flynn's first administration, the Bay State economy was running high. The high-tech economy of New England was unusually strong, jobs were plentiful, wages were high, construction was booming, and real estate values shot up to incredible heights. Although there were some unsettling signs of what some economists were calling a "rolling recession" that was bringing hard times to petroleum centers in Texas and Louisiana, Bay Staters were assured that the "Massachusetts Miracle" being touted by Governor Michael Dukakis and state Democratic leaders would continue unabated. Taking advantage of the good times during his second administration, from 1988 to 1992, Mayor Flynn mended fences in his home community over the public housing issue and



Raymond L. Flynn was elected mayor of Boston in 1983, won reelection in 1987 and 1991, and in 1993 left office to accept the post of U.S. Ambassador to the Vatican. As mayor, Flynn emphasized the importance of the neighborhoods and promised to protect the civil rights and political liberties of all citizens in every part of the city. He traveled around the city, met with voters, took care of local problems, and established a reputation as "the people's mayor." *Courtesy of Boston City Hall.*

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built new political alliances throughout the other neighborhoods. By energetic rounds of public appearances and civic activities, he clearly reestablished his popularity as “the people’s mayor.” When he ran again in November 1991, he not only won a third time, but he also captured every precinct in every ward in the city—a first in Boston’s history.

As Ray Flynn embarked upon his third term as mayor of Boston in January 1992, several problems that had been simmering over the previous two years threatened to upset the social and economic stability he had been trying so hard to maintain. During the 1980s, the Reagan administration’s policy of deregulation had created a high-flying economy reminiscent of the Roaring Twenties. Banks handed out loans for risky ventures, “junk bonds” achieved a new legitimacy, fast-moving speculators generated quick profits, and real estate prices went through the roof. Within a year of Republican George Bush’s victory over Massachusetts Democrat Michael Dukakis in November 1988, however, the “Massachusetts Miracle” collapsed and Boston found itself in trouble. Eight years of tax-cutting, combined with soaring welfare costs and inflated medical charges, had pushed the federal debt past the \$3 trillion mark, while the deficit in 1991 reached nearly \$170 billion.

The national recession took a heavy toll on the Boston economy. Banks failed, the savings and loan industry collapsed, housing construction declined, major industries failed, and unemployment rose to new heights. At a time when states were forced to cut back on social services and welfare funding, the number of homeless people became larger than ever. The city of Boston, like other major urban centers with sizable minority populations and serious social commitments, felt the impact of hard times as industry continued to decline, bank failures became common, more companies declared bankruptcy, and more workers lost their jobs.

The recession of the 1990s exacerbated problems that had been festering during the 1980s, but those problems seemed to worsen with disturbing reports of guns, drugs, and violence. In poor neighborhoods where unemployment, homelessness, and poverty were prevalent, children sold drugs on street corners, teenagers carried guns and knives to school, gangs roamed the streets, and innocent bystanders were murdered in random drive-by shootings. This type of violence spilled over into the city’s public school system, which threatened to become more unmanageable than ever. Having barely recovered from the prolonged trauma of court-ordered busing, the city’s educational system felt the impact of both economic cutbacks and urban violence. The lack of adequate

funding caused serious shortages in textbooks, laboratory equipment, instructional resources, trained personnel, and programs in arts, music, and sports. And all the while, the increasing menace of guns, knives, and drugs threatened the lives of teachers and students on a daily basis, making a proper educational atmosphere almost impossible. In an effort to balance the school department budget, reduce administrative red tape, and increase spending for classroom instruction, Mayor Flynn proposed changes in the existing forms of school government. In 1991, voters approved a referendum calling for the establishment of a seven-member school committee, whose members would serve four-year terms and be appointed by the mayor from among nominees recommended by a broad-based nominating committee. This new appointed committee officially replaced the former thirteen-member elected committee in January 1992.

From 1985 to 1991, Ray Flynn also involved himself in national affairs, serving as chair of the United States Conference of Mayors' Task Force on Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty, and attacking the Reagan administration for neglecting the nation's cities and ignoring the needs of the poor. In 1991 Flynn was elected president of the Conference of Mayors and placed urban issues at the top of the national agenda. There can be little doubt that his involvement in national affairs and his association with prominent Washington figures opened the Boston mayor's eyes to new opportunities for higher political office. A man who had spent his entire life in city politics, Ray Flynn faced the end of his third mayoral term in 1995 with the nagging question of how he would make a living once his political career was over. He had no family income, no law practice, no real estate business, no insurance agency—and relatively little left of his campaign funds. The prospect of stepping into empty space in his early fifties was a frightening one and helps explain Flynn's almost frenetic search for a secure source of income after leaving City Hall. He worked energetically for the national Democratic party in the 1992 campaign against George Bush, clearly hoping, as a big-city mayor, to win a Cabinet post either in the Department of Housing and Urban Development or in the Department of Labor. After the election of Bill Clinton in November 1992, however, no Cabinet position was forthcoming; instead, Flynn was offered the post of Ambassador to the Vatican. After a period of indecision during the summer of 1993, Flynn finally accepted the overseas post, whereupon Thomas M. Menino, president of the Boston City Council, became temporary mayor until a mayoral election could be held in November.

Mayor Raymond Flynn was sworn in as U.S. Ambassador to the Vatican in a White House ceremony on Friday, July 9, 1993. The following Monday, he

resigned as mayor and handed the reins of government to city council president Thomas Menino. The grandson of Italian immigrants who had left the village of Grottaminarda in the province of Avellino to come to America early in the century, Thomas Menino was born on December 27, 1942, and grew up in the Hyde Park district of Boston, where his parents, Carl and Susan, had lived their entire lives and where his father worked thirty-five years at the local Westinghouse plant. Young Tom acquired a serious interest in politics at the age of thirteen when he helped one of his father's friends run for state representative. After graduating from St. Thomas Aquinas High School, the young man almost immediately went into political life. From 1978 to 1983, he was a senior research assistant to the state legislature's Joint Committee on Urban Affairs; from 1983 to 1985 he served as vice-chair of the city council's Committee on Housing; in 1989 he became regional chair for the National Trust for Historic Preservation. A lifelong resident of Hyde Park, Menino represented that district in the Boston City Council for nine years. In 1993 he was elected president of the city council and, as such, became the temporary successor when Mayor Flynn departed for Rome.

At that point, the stage was set for a special preliminary election in September. Once again, with no established policy of succession and no citywide mechanism to screen prospective candidates, a number of mayoral hopefuls emerged. In addition to Menino, the list included Roxbury at-large city councilor Bruce Bolling, the only minority candidate in the race; James Brett, a state representative from Dorchester; Christopher Lydon, a public television commentator; Francis (Mickey) Roache, Flynn's friend and former police commissioner; Robert Ruffo, sheriff of Suffolk County; and Rosaria Salerno, at-large city councilor from Allston-Brighton. Menino and Brett became the two finalists after the September primary; two months later, Menino won the November election by a substantial margin. It was clear that in neighborhoods such as Charlestown, East Boston, Hyde Park, South Boston, and West Roxbury where the ethnic turnout was the greatest, most white voters preferred the blunt, plain-spoken, down-to-earth approach of Menino to Brett's more sophisticated manner that many critics associated with the polished style of Beacon Hill legislators. Apparently, the voters wanted to continue the bread-and-butter, neighborhood-oriented policies of Ray Flynn for at least another four years. And so Thomas Menino became the first Italian-American mayor in Boston's history.

Local and national newspaper columnists and television commentators raised the question of whether the victory of Tom Menino was the last hurrah

for Irish politicians in Boston. Would Ray Flynn go down in history as the city's last Irish-Catholic mayor? Certainly the latest demographic figures suggested that it was a distinct possibility. During the 1970s, the city's Latin American population had shown a remarkable increase as refugees from Haiti, Cuba, El Salvador, Honduras, Colombia, and Nicaragua sought to escape the effects of organized crime and political oppression in their native countries. Then, during the 1980s, Boston received additional numbers of homeless immigrants from the war zones and refugee camps of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and other parts of Southeast Asia. And the impact of this new wave of immigration was soon as evident in Boston as it was in other parts of the country. As late as 1965, some 90 percent of the immigrants coming into the United States each year were still coming from the more familiar countries of continental Europe. By 1985, however—only twenty years later—that figure had dropped to a mere 10 percent. Between 1980 and 1990 alone, the number of Asians in the United States doubled, reaching more than seven million, while the Latino population reached twenty million that same year. Demographers estimate that by the year 2030, Americans of European origin will be in a decided minority.

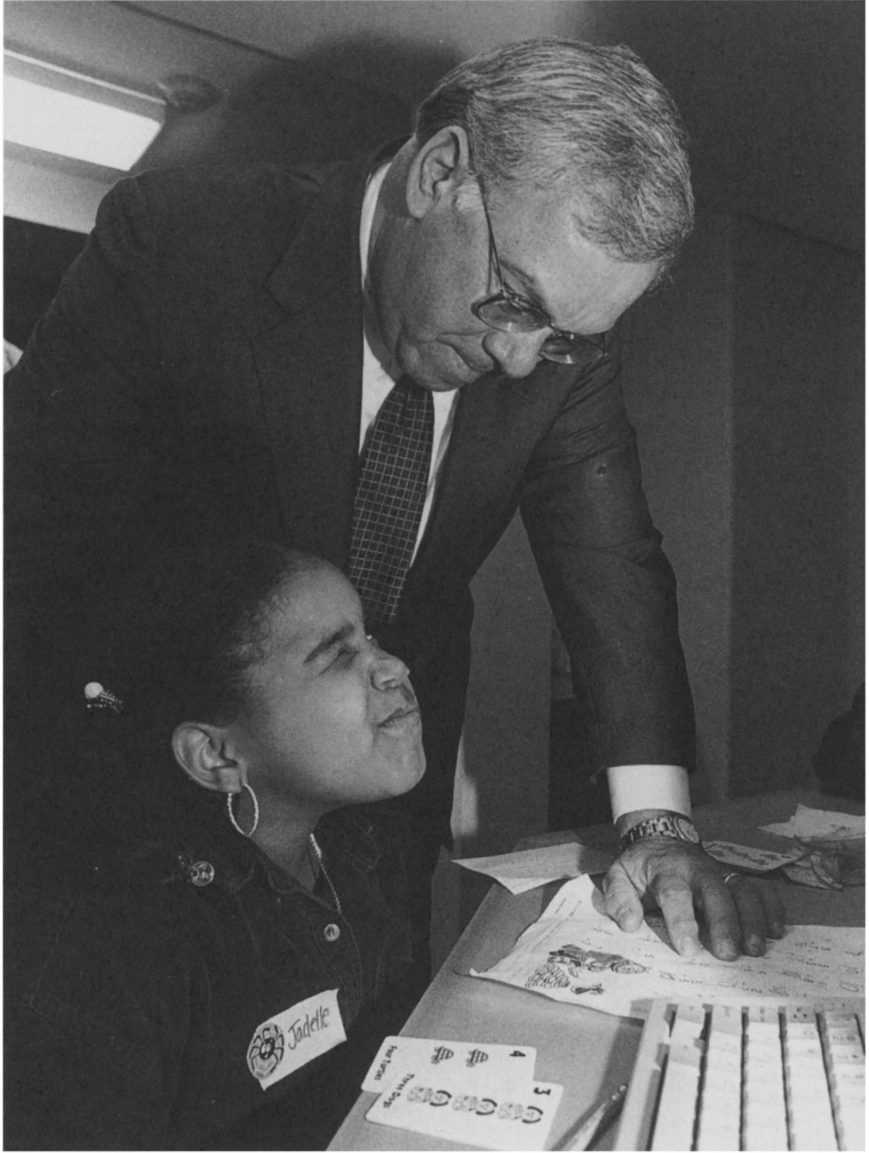
These dramatic national statistics were certainly reflected in the demographic changes taking place in Boston. Between 1980 and 1990, the city's white population dropped more than 11 percent to constitute only 59 percent of the total. By contrast, the African-American population in the city rose by 11.4 percent, the Latino population by 39 percent, and the Asian population by 45 percent. The long-range impact of these demographic changes was perhaps most dramatically evident in the makeup of the city's public school system. Although in 1980 the total population of the city was still nearly 60 percent white, the number of school-aged children who were white had already dropped to 52 percent. By 1990, that figure had declined to 40 percent, making the number of white school-aged children much lower than the combined number of African-American, Haitian, Hispanic, and Asian youngsters. Concrete evidence of this change came in August 1999 when the Boston School Committee decided it would no longer use race as a basis for assigning children to the public schools. The main reason given was that parents now wished to focus on educational equity and quality rather than race. The reality was, however, that using race as a yardstick for assignments hardly mattered anymore. With the Boston school population now 84 percent minority, more than 97 percent of the city's sixty-four thousand students would be assigned to their first-choice schools. "Busing is being abandoned," wrote Orlando Patterson in the *New York Times*,

“because there is nothing for busing to do, there being hardly any white students left in the system for minorities to integrate with.” Patterson commented on the irony that what started out as a program to integrate minorities into a predominantly white school system back in the 1970s ended up by creating a school system with a “minority majority.”

With school desegregation no longer a major consideration, by the 1990s greater attention was given to raising academic standards and improving the conditions of the schools themselves. In 1993, the state Department of Education established the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), a series of standardized tests designed to examine the effectiveness of the teaching process and the ability of students to meet the standards of promotion in various subjects. Despite charges that the tests were unfair, that students would be denied diplomas, and that teachers were treated badly, the MCAS test scores provided valuable information regarding the level of teaching effectiveness in various parts of the commonwealth. In Boston, Mayor Thomas Menino announced he would place a high personal priority on raising academic standards in the public schools and improving the physical conditions of the schools throughout the city. As city councilor he had actively supported policies and programs to advance educational reform. He took advantage of state legislation to establish the City of Boston Scholarship Fund, through which qualified students could apply for scholarship money—collected through property and excise tax bills as well as from corporate donations—to attend local colleges and universities. After his election as mayor, Menino worked out an important contract between the Boston School Department and the Boston Teachers’ Union that paved the way for some systematic reforms, and he continued to work closely with Superintendent Thomas W. Payzant and the appointed members of the school committee. In a November 1996 referendum, Boston voters chose to retain the appointed school committee rather than return to the thirteen-member elected committee that had been voted out four years earlier. Two months later, delivering his 1996 State of the City address at the Jeremiah E. Burke High School, which had recently lost its accreditation, the mayor expressed his belief that education was the key to creating greater economic security and asked that he be judged on how far he was able to take the Boston public schools.

Mayor Menino persisted in his concern for an improved educational system, and in his 1998 inaugural address he announced the Boston 2:00–6:00 After-School Initiative, which supported partnerships between youth-serving

A NEW BOSTON



Thomas M. Menino, whose grandparents emigrated from Italy, became the first mayor of Italian ancestry in Boston's history. Governing a city whose population was rapidly becoming more diverse and multicultural, Menino promised to emphasize education, ensure safety, and promote economic development. This photograph shows Mayor Menino on one of his many visits to the city's schools, taking a personal interest in the worksheets of one of the students as she grapples with the problems of arithmetic. *Courtesy of Carla Osberg.*

organizations to offer after-school programs in elementary and middle schools throughout the neighborhoods. As of the fall of 1999, a total of fifty-seven schools—more than 30 percent of the city's elementary and middle schools—were operating after-school programs that served over 2,750 children. Each of these programs offered a diversity of recreation, academic enrichment, and arts and cultural programming.

The influence of the “new” Bostonians was not confined to the population of Boston's school system. In a remarkably short time, many new immigrants had moved into parts of Boston's neighborhoods that once had been overwhelmingly Irish. Everywhere one could hear strange voices and unfamiliar tongues: Vietnamese, Laotian, Cambodian, Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Czech, Slovak, Greek, Polish, Russian, Lebanese, Italian, and others, while signs and symbols of these changes were apparent throughout the city. On one stretch of Brighton Avenue in Allston, there was a Russian restaurant, a Southeast Asian food store, and a Middle Eastern restaurant, while across the street was the Sons of Greece social club with a Vietnamese food store only a short distance away. Allston-Brighton Free Radio announced that it would include programs in Spanish, Portuguese, Ethiopian, and Eritrean music. In Jamaica Plain, grocery stores, clothing shops, and hairdressing salons with signs in Spanish along the stretch of Washington Street from Eggleston Square to Forest Hills showed how the old Irish neighborhood had changed; in Hyde Park, hundreds of African-American youngsters made their way to the Academy of the Pacific Rim in the old Westinghouse building where Mayor Menino's father had once worked. And similar changes could be seen along Dorchester Avenue, the six-mile-long road that runs through the spine of Boston's largest neighborhood from the outskirts of South Boston to the suburb of Milton. Signs in Spanish and Vietnamese were posted in the windows of the bank in Fields Corner; the ATM machine on the corner of Dorchester Avenue offered instructions in English and Spanish as well as in Braille; the voice-mail system at Dorchester House greeted callers in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. In the Field's Corner section, where solid three-decker houses still stood as a reminder of the Irish-Catholic families who had once dominated the neighborhood, new ethnic groups had changed the character of the community. St. Matthew's Church, built with the savings of Irish immigrants, held liturgies in French for the benefit of its mostly Haitian immigrant parishioners. And at nearby St. Peter's Church, also originally Irish, three Vietnamese priests ministered to the Vietnamese congregation. In so many ways, these new waves of immigrants are transforming

Boston into a city where the traditional white, ethnic population is fast being outnumbered by people of color from different and largely unfamiliar parts of the world.

Despite the fact that the “new” Bostonians made up a new majority in Boston, however, the city’s voting population, particularly in municipal elections, continued to remain older, white, and distinctly ethnic. Throughout the 1990s, members of the new majority did not play much of a role in the city’s continuing political drama, largely because they did not make use of the traditional political processes. Many of the newcomers are not eligible to vote, it is true, but many who are eligible are not politically active. In the words of one *Boston Globe* columnist, they constitute an essentially “passive audience.” According to one study of the voter turnout in the 1991 mayoral election, for example, nearly half the voters in that election, as well as about 40 percent of the registered voters in the city, lived in six neighborhoods: South Boston, West Roxbury, Roslindale, Charlestown, South Dorchester, and Hyde Park. Although these six neighborhoods contained only 29 percent of the voting-age residents of the city, they made up 46 percent of the votes cast in the election. Significantly, these six neighborhoods were overwhelmingly white and composed of working- and middle-class residents. According to the same study, the least powerful wards in terms of voting power contained 28 percent of the voting-age residents, but only 13 percent of its voters. These wards were Chinatown, the South End, Roxbury, the Back Bay and Fenway areas, and Allston-Brighton—neighborhoods composed of minority group members, students, or affluent young professionals. How long a major urban center such as Boston, whose overall population is increasingly nonwhite, can continue to have its political institutions and municipal policies dominated by a minority of white voters is a matter of serious concern, not only for the stability of the city, but also for the continuance of the representative political process.

The 1990s was not only a decade of significant demographic change, but also remarkable social change as well. Numerous international cultural reforms, sexual revolutions, social upheavals, and religious changes during the 1970s and 1980s were having a substantial impact on everyday life and society in the United States by the 1990s. In Boston, as well as in other major cities throughout the nation, defiance of established authority, rebellion against the generally accepted norms of civilized behavior, and rejection of long-accepted moral values showed the many ways in which such institutions as religion, the family, and law are no longer receiving the same measure of respect, or exerting the

LIFE IN A CHANGING CITY



The recent history of Boston has been marked by the rapid influx of people from Puerto Rico, Haiti, Cuba, Colombia, Honduras, and other parts of Latin America, as well as immigrants from various regions of Asia. Bringing in different languages, customs, foods, and festivities to diversify the life and society of Boston, the newcomers are quickly adding an even greater measure of multiculturalism to a city that had earlier adjusted to the influx of people from many parts of Europe. *Republished with permission of Globe Newspaper Company, Inc., from the July 23, 1995, issue of the Boston Globe, © 1995.*

same degree of influence, that formerly distinguished their recognized presence in the Boston community.

It is clear, for example, that the once-dominant and unquestioned authority of the Catholic Church in a predominantly Irish-Catholic city such as Boston has lost a good deal of its earlier force, and that the once-pervasive influence of pastors, priests, and nuns in the daily lives of parishioners has all but disappeared. And disturbing statistics indicate that the problem will probably become even more complex as time goes on. Throughout the United States, new vocations to the priesthood were a fraction of what they had once been—9,000 seminarians in 1966, for example, down to only 3,000 in 1990—while the number of young people choosing to go into religious life continued to decrease at an alarming rate. Between 1960 and 1978, attendance at Mass by Catholics

in the Greater Boston area was reported to have declined from 75 percent to 55 percent; older priests were dying off or retiring at a rate of 25–30 a year; the number of seminarians at St. John's Seminary had declined from an all-time high of 418 in 1960 to only 126 in 1975. At a convocation of clergy and laity in March 1998, Boston's Cardinal Bernard Law reported a projected 22 percent decline in the number of diocesan priests by the year 2005, and predicted the closing of 40 to 60 parishes by the year 2008.

None of this suggests that the Catholic Church will disappear from the scene, or that it will cease to be an important influence in Boston. But it does seem clear that it will have to direct that influence in different ways, toward different objectives and with different personnel. In view of changing economic conditions, for example, the church will probably devote more of its funds and energy to pressing social and charitable needs, ranging from family counseling and care for the elderly to pregnancy assistance and AIDS ministries. Archdiocesan resources will also be channeled toward the interests of new apostolates of Asian, Hispanic, Haitian, and Irish immigrants who now make up the membership of many parishes. In meeting these demands, an increasing number of lay people—men and women—will have much greater roles in church affairs, taking over more and more functions previously considered the sole prerogative of the clergy. These will include not only areas such as property advisement and financial management, but also spiritual direction and pastoral counseling. As the traditional limits of old parish boundaries give way to the much newer concept of area clusters and regional groupings, church leaders will be called upon to meet the new challenges of a changing society in a much more flexible and imaginative manner.

In addition to responding to a variety of social and institutional changes, the Catholic Church in Boston has also been affected by the kind of demographic changes that have affected so many other aspects of modern city life. The influx of new immigrants, for example, has contributed to the changing ethnic composition of the church in general while helping to transform traditional parish boundaries in areas where new highway construction, industrial projects, and commercial developments forced out the original residents. Old gothic churches in depopulated urban areas where former congregations had either died off or moved away are often practically deserted. Pews that once were filled to overflowing at Sunday morning Mass are painfully empty; devotional services that had once drawn thousands of faithful communicants now go largely unattended. In the lower end of South Boston, for example, the absence

of a substantial congregation made it necessary for the archdiocese to close SS. Peter and Paul's Church, one of the oldest parishes in Boston. Issues of nationality and language, too, presented challenges involving both financial management and public relations. With second and third generations of young English-speaking families growing up and moving out to the suburbs, and with a diminishing number of priests competent in languages other than English, a number of the "old" German, French, Italian, Portuguese, Polish, and Lithuanian churches fell into serious disrepair and had to be closed down. These were always sad and painful experiences for original parishioners from the "old countries" who had expected their churches to continue to reflect their special ethnic and cultural characteristics. At the same time, however, as we have already seen in Dorchester, a number of comparatively new ethnic and racial populations, largely Latino and Asian, are rapidly moving into the various neighborhoods of Boston, replacing white ethnic groups who had replaced previous immigrant groups during earlier generations.

Along with the declining influence of religion as a major force in Boston society, the institution of the family and the traditional character of family values are also undergoing substantial change. The sexual revolution of the 1970s and 1980s, the prevalence of birth control, the frequency of divorce and subsequent marriages, the rise in the number of single-parent families, the increase in the number of unwed mothers, and the openness of same-sex unions have produced such an amazing array of alternative and unconventional lifestyles that "normal family" became almost impossible to define. Traditional family values, the rules of parental authority, the standards of juvenile behavior and the norms of appropriate discipline in many cases became either nonexistent or totally irrelevant. In an age of television, motion pictures, radio talk shows, rap music, MTV, and Internet chat rooms, young people are much more apt to draw their models and their values from the Cult of the Celebrity that worships fast cars, high fashion, big money, and promiscuous behavior than from older institutions that sought to inculcate the old-fashioned virtues of moderation, self-restraint, polite manners, and good taste. Writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, Nancy Ann Jeffrey decries an "e-culture" that glorifies "speed over decorum and innovation over tradition," while national columnist George Will laments the extent to which incivility has become almost normal in today's world. The vulgarity and self-absorption of the "high-tech barbarians," he says, have created a generation that is "electronically disassociated" from the society in which they exist. As a leading American city whose reputation has always been

based on its historical traditions, its literary preeminence, and its high cultural standards, Boston—once hailed as the Athens of America—must take these considerations seriously if it is to retain its position as a recognized arbiter of manners and taste.

In the course of this decade of social and cultural change, Mayor Menino had the extreme good fortune of presiding over the City of Boston during one of the most prosperous periods in the nation's history. With the destruction of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the end of the threat of world communism, the United States entered into what Yale economist Robert Shiller called an "Age of Triumphalism" that produced an exuberant confidence in American capitalism. The great bull market began its ceaseless upward climb in 1990, as stock market prices, combined with the transistor, the microchip, and the microprocessor—those "minute dynamos" as *Time Magazine* called them—generated a new era of commercial growth. This combination of a "hot" economy and a brand new technology created an unprecedented level of prosperity in Boston, which became the nation's largest source of venture capital. The city had \$1.5 trillion in equity funds under management, the third highest amount in the world after London and New York. It also controlled one-quarter of the country's \$5.5 trillion mutual fund business, prompting *Boston Magazine* to exclaim in May 2000: "The city is swimming in money!" The same journal reported that the combined wealth of the twenty richest people in the town actually exceeded the gross domestic product of New Zealand.

It was during this same period of prosperity, however, that the city's economic base also underwent a subtle but considerable transformation. Economic change is certainly not something entirely new in the three and a half centuries of Boston's existence. During the nineteenth century, for example, the shipping traditions of commerce and trade gave way to the water wheels and power looms of textile factories that greatly diversified the city's early economic development. Investments in banking and speculation in railroading provided additional sources of wealth to the local economy until after World War II, when the new electronics industry spawned a network of new corporate enterprises along Route 128. A demand for consumer products after the war, combined with Cold War demands for advanced air defense systems, helped feed the new electronics boom. MIT created the Lincoln Laboratory to develop radar, radio communications, and digital computing, later spinning off the Mitre Corporation as another research component. Boston became what the economist

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Barry Bluestone has called a “hotbed of innovations,” including the computer architecture designed by the region’s “big four” high-tech companies—Digital Equipment, Data General, Prime, and Wang—along with the microwave oven developed by Raytheon. And in downtown Boston itself, the First National Bank (now Fleet) steered wealthy investors toward high-tech entrepreneurs, while Fidelity, Puritan, Putnam Investors, and Keystone joined other global financial companies operating out of the city. But throughout it all, whether it was shipping, textiles, electronics, or computer chips, the economy was always in the hands of persons who either lived in the city of Boston or commuted from nearly suburbs and bedroom communities on the North Shore. Most of them felt a personal and individual loyalty to their city and participated regularly in civic occasions, community programs, fund-raising activities, and cultural enterprises.

As the nature of the high-tech economy changed, however, so did the character of local ownership. In an age of corporate mergers, multinational enterprises, and international headquarters, during the 1980s and 1990s fewer and fewer Boston companies were privately owned or managed by directors, presidents, and executives who claimed Boston as their place of birth or their permanent home. Such well-known Boston institutions as the New England Telephone Company, the Shawmut Bank, Beacon Properties, Jordan Marsh, and Filene’s were sold, merged, or moved out of state. The *Boston Globe* was taken over by the *New York Times*, and even the Boston Safe Deposit and Trust Company—the original home of The Vault—was bought by a Pennsylvania concern. Although the Boston Coordinating Committee (The Vault) continued to function for a time, in 1997 it officially announced its discontinuance. Fleet Bank financial chief Terrence Murray, Bank of Boston chief Chad Gifford, Boston Edison head Thomas May, and others decided that The Vault no longer served its original purpose. It was a dramatic symbol of a significant change in Boston’s economic life whose long-range consequences have yet to be fully appreciated.

For the moment, however, times were good and money was plentiful. The post–World War II shift from traditional mill-based occupations to what recent economists have called “mind-based” occupations produced some dramatic shifts in the nature of the city’s service industry. During the 1980s, Boston was enjoying a high rate of employment in “pink-collar” service industries. Suppliers of electronic components and accessories had already expanded rapidly, as had a number of supporting business and professional services such

as software design, computer and data processing, management consulting, advertising, marketing, and public relations. By 1990, however, these services had given way to even more sophisticated white-collar occupations, including those provided by professional men and women in such fields as law, medicine, education, and business. This substantial upgrading had paid off in terms of higher wages for those with advanced schooling but resulted in lower earnings for those without such educational advantages. The prosperous economy, the availability of investment opportunities, and now the lowest jobless rate in the country were undoubtedly factors that encouraged the development of two major construction projects that promised to change forever the size and character of Boston's downtown area: the Central Artery/Tunnel Project and the Waterfront Project.

During the 1950s, in the early stages of Boston's postwar urban renewal, a six-lane elevated highway had been built through the city's waterfront section. Known as the Central Artery, it was designed to permit motorists to travel from the South Shore to the North Shore without driving through the notoriously crooked and congested streets of downtown Boston. Two problems quickly emerged from this highway project: First, the Central Artery effectively cut off the waterfront area, especially the historic North End, from the rest of the city of Boston. Second, by the time it was completed, the Central Artery had already become obsolete. Originally designed to handle about seventy-five thousand vehicles a day, the highway was eventually carrying more than two hundred thousand vehicles a day, producing horrendous traffic jams through the heart of the city and back into the neighboring suburbs.

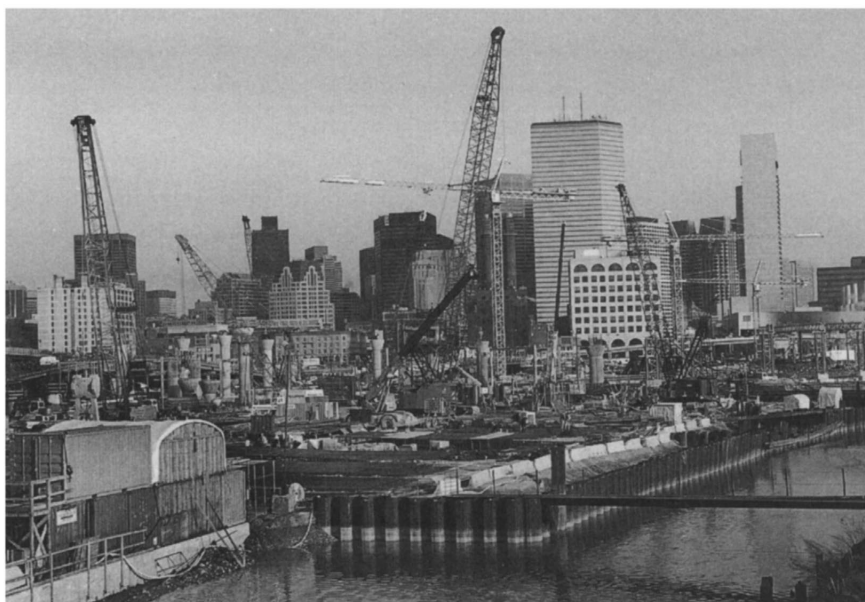
In an attempt to solve both these problems, during the 1980s state transportation officials came up with an ambitious, complicated, and highly expensive project that became known to locals as the "Big Dig." The state decided to put the existing Central Artery underground, eventually creating over the depressed artery an attractive area of natural parks and walkways along Atlantic Avenue that would not only beautify the city but also unify some of the oldest and most historic parts of downtown Boston.

From the very outset of its original consideration, the Central Artery/Tunnel Project was the subject of continuous political arguments and financial recriminations because of the length of time it would take to complete the job, the serious disruptions of downtown traffic, and the amount of money the project would involve. According to initial plans, the Big Dig, the largest civil-engineering construction job in U.S. history, was supposed to take eighteen

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years to complete. It was projected for completion in the year 2004, and the total cost of construction was set at \$11 billion. At first, the Reagan administration refused to allocate any federal funds at all for the ambitious project. Later, when the money was finally forthcoming, many unforeseen technical difficulties made the project seem impossible. Much of the original landfill in the old waterfront area, for example, proved much too soft to work with, and some of the existing bridges were too low to accommodate the tall cranes and construction equipment. All these difficulties were further complicated by the fact that the eight-mile-long project had to be undertaken while all parts of the city continued to function at normal capacity.

The first phase of the extensive construction project that tore up acres of land along the harbor front of South Boston and tunneled under Boston Harbor all the way to East Boston was opened in December 1995. This was the Ted



The largest civil-engineering construction project in U.S. history, the Central Artery/Tunnel Project, known popularly as the Big Dig, is managed by the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority. The goal of the project is to replace the existing Central Artery, which cuts through the heart of the city, with an underground expressway. The depression will eventually be covered over with an attractive area of parks and buildings that will unify some of the oldest and most historic parts of downtown Boston. *Republished with permission of Globe Newspaper Company, Inc., from the December 23, 1999, issue of the Boston Globe, © 2000.*

Williams Tunnel, named after the famous Red Sox home-run hitter, providing a new access under Boston Harbor directly to Logan Airport. In October 1999, a four-lane span across the Charles River, called the Leverett Circle Connector Bridge, also opened on schedule, taking traffic out of Boston from the Leverett Circle to Route I-93 north. A much larger ten-lane bridge is under construction that will give the North End, the Sumner Tunnel, and the Government Center direct access to Route I-93 north. The widest cable-stayed bridge in the world, it will have 300-foot towers to provide the fulcrum for cables that anchor the weight of the main span of the bridge to land-based back spans. Unfortunately, however, significant overruns in scores of multimillion-dollar contracts caused the initial cost estimates to skyrocket with the result that in February 2000, Big Dig officials announced that the project would cost at least \$12.1 billion—a \$1.4 billion revision in the original figure. Despite this fiscal miscalculation, state authorities insisted that the project would be completed early in the year 2005.

At the same time that the Big Dig was under construction, city authorities decided to enlarge financial opportunities by expanding into the only area where open land was available for commercial development—eastward across the Fort Point Channel into the lower end of the South Boston peninsula. A district dominated by wharves, ship terminals, fish-processing plants, and warehouses, its convenient location—only a ten-minute walk from Boston's downtown financial district and a six-minute drive to Logan International Airport—made it a prime target for "New Boston's" next move. Already the federal government had selected a strategic corner of land called the Fan Pier as the site for a modernistic new federal courthouse that looked out onto Boston Harbor; in 1998, only a short distance away, the World Trade Center opened a Seaport Hotel on land leased from Massport. The focal point of the city's plans for the district, however, was a major convention center large enough to attract the kinds of national and international meetings that had been bypassing Boston.

For a project of its size and complexity, the convention center actually went from concept to construction in a relatively short period of time. Over the course of three years, a group of politicians and business leaders shepherded enabling legislation through the state legislature and agreed on a site and design, and then the city took the sixty-two acres by eminent domain. Financed by \$700 million in state and municipal bonds and taxes, the convention center is a modernistic structure 120 feet long and six stories high. The center itself is likely to lose money (about \$15 million annually) but is expected to generate

some \$500 million a year in direct economic activity. "The convention center is a loss leader to fill the hotels and restaurants," explained Alan D. Reid, the center's chief financial officer. In addition to the center, eight other projects, valued at \$3 billion, are being developed nearby, including luxury hotels, office buildings, and twelve hundred residential units to be constructed within the next five years.

The increased real estate costs generated by the Waterfront Project have already raised housing prices in many of the surrounding residential areas but are expected to have a special impact on the neighborhood of South Boston. "The waterfront," said Dean Stratouly, a Cambridge developer directing the convention project, "is going from lunch boxes to briefcases." Acutely aware of the effects the project would have in gentrifying the traditionally blue-collar, working-class neighborhood of South Boston and creating difficulties for low-income residents, in April 1999 political representatives from South Boston worked out a "memorandum of understanding" with the Menino administration agreeing that moneys would be used for the benefit of their community. The "linkage" part of this agreement, whereby linkage payments from developers would be distributed among the various neighborhoods, was fairly well defined in city zoning laws. Other payments in the form of "community benefits," however, which could divert \$65–75 million for the exclusive use of South Boston, were challenged by the mayor as well as by representatives of other neighborhoods, who claimed that all communities should share more equitably in the dispersal of linkage funds.

The dispute between the mayor and the South Boston representatives was seen by some observers as a potential Achilles' heel in the mayor's otherwise impenetrable political armor. For nearly seven years, since he took over after Ray Flynn's departure in 1993, Menino had relatively smooth sailing and in 1997 was reelected without any opposition at all. Governing during a time of economic prosperity and diminished voter interest, he was credited with running the city effectively, cutting back on serious crime, and working hard to improve the city's public schools. In the matter of development, however, his critics pointed to a number of inconsistencies that raised questions about his administrative decisions. Some complained that he bullied his opponents and intimidated personnel who disagreed with him; others claimed that he tended to be unpredictable in his decisions and secretive in his procedures. He strongly supported a convention center, for example, and yet opposed a new runway at Logan Airport; he encouraged the Red Sox to plan a new ballpark in the

Fenway area but sent out mixed signals about their actual proposals; he worked out an ill-advised “memorandum of understanding” with South Boston leaders and then refused to honor the agreement. These kinds of shortcomings caused several commentators to raise questions about Menino’s political prospects for the future.

A great many of the controversies between city leaders and private investors, however, were not merely local political feuds or trivial personal animosities. More often than not, they reflected serious and longstanding differences of opinion about the way in which the city will expand its boundaries and the manner in which various interests will benefit by the extraordinary expansion of land and profits at a time of critical change. Forty years earlier, when the postwar urban renewal projects of mayors John B. Hynes and John F. Collins set out to rescue an old, dilapidated city from financial collapse and physical deterioration, the resulting “New Boston” rose on the ashes of a city whose general size and configuration had not changed much in the course of a century, and whose population continued to reflect the social and cultural patterns of white European immigration. The present expansion of the downtown area of the city across the Fort Point Channel into the seaport area of South Boston, however, not only extends the territorial limits of the city well beyond the downtown area, but also dramatizes conflicting visions of what Boston is going to look like in the twenty-first century. Some Bostonians would prefer the old forms and the traditional boundaries that made Boston well-known as a “city of neighborhoods,” retaining the insular nature and colorful character of the various ethnic groups. Others, however, would prefer a newer and more unified city, in which old boundaries would no longer provide either geographical division or social separation.

These are considerations that must be taken seriously, because although Boston’s past is certainly rich, colorful, and fascinating, its future has yet to be defined. As we stand at the opening of the twenty-first century, it is important to recognize the fact that the “Old Boston”—the Boston as we have known it in history and in literature—no longer exists. Some time ago it ceased to be the Boston of John Winthrop, Josiah Quincy, or James Jackson Storrow—the Boston of *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table* or *The Late George Apley*. But at this point, it is equally clear that it is no longer the Boston of John Francis Fitzgerald, James Michael Curley, or John F. Kennedy—the Boston of *The Last Hurrah* or *The Friends of Eddie Coyle*. All that may be wonderfully romantic and nostalgic, but it is now part of the city’s past, not of its future. Instead of Yankees,

Irish, and Italians, Boston is increasingly populated by African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans—these are our “new Bostonians.” Instead of a small, close-knit coterie of Brahmins who made their money in old family businesses and sat quietly on their trust funds, the city is populated by a younger generation of high-tech entrepreneurs who generate the kind of profits previously reserved for New York and Chicago. Businesses formerly owned for generations by prominent Boston families have been taken over by national enterprises and international conglomerates. And booming real estate prices have transformed the old blue-collar neighborhoods like Charlestown and South Boston into condominium communities where young newcomers can travel to work on their bicycles after they have had their morning latte at Starbuck’s. Boston has become a city in the midst of remarkable social, cultural, and economic changes that could well homogenize the unique and distinctive character of the old city and turn it into just another urban center, almost indistinguishable from most other American cities.

Not that change itself is anything new in Boston’s history, although it has always been regarded with some degree of suspicion and a definite sense of apprehension. In the course of three hundred years, however, Boston has actually succeeded in adapting to a number of substantive changes without losing that sense of history that is so much a part of its special identity, and without giving up on a commitment to excellence that has characterized its social and cultural life. It succeeded in replacing colonial rule with national statehood, substituting an industrial technology for its former commercial supremacy, expanding a basically elitist establishment to offer a remarkable range of humanitarian institutions, adjusting a rigid and homogeneous society to include an increasing amount of both ethnic and racial diversity—all without losing those distinctive characteristics that make it quaint, colorful, and decidedly different.

And that is Boston’s challenge for tomorrow. It must continue to combine the old with the new, the past with the present, the advances of the new technologies with the traditions of academic excellence, the profits of business with the pleasures of the fine arts. While expanding its geographical boundaries, it should strive to preserve its reputation as a livable city, a small town where everybody can still get everywhere by walking. It would do well to maintain its reputation as a city of distinctive neighborhoods, but work to prevent the kinds of racial conflicts and turf battles that have marked so much of its recent history. It is important for Boston to restore the preeminence of a public school

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system whereby all citizens are determined that every boy and girl, regardless of background, has the opportunity to “know enough” in order to achieve great things. And it is essential for the city to create the kind of open and welcoming society that provides social and economic opportunities for newcomers from various lands and different cultures. After all, in a city where colonial churches, federal townhouses, and Greek Revival markets can exist alongside Victorian mansions, Gothic cathedrals, and high-rise skyscrapers of glass and steel, it seems entirely possible for Boston’s inhabitants to live together in a similar spirit of tolerance and harmony. If the lessons of the past can be brought to bear on the challenges of the future, then the new millennium could be one of considerable promise and opportunity for the City of Boston.

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